

## Montana Note and Additional Notes to ECERS-R

*Note: The Montana Notes that follow supersede the additional notes included in the book and the Notes for Clarification from North Carolina. These are the notes that will be used for assessments from September 1<sup>st</sup> until the next revision April 1<sup>st</sup>. It is important to disregard any NC Notes for Clarification that come out until the next April 1<sup>st</sup> revision.*

### General Notes

Items to be omitted from MT scoring: #38, #39, #40, #41, #42, #43

*For detailed interpretation of the indicators please refer to the ECERS-R All About Book.*

In order to clarify the different but related functions of cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting to remove germs, "Caring for Our Children" states that cleaning means physically removing dirt and contamination using soap, water and applying friction, thus exposing any remaining germs on the dry, clean surface. Sanitizing means reducing germs on an inanimate surface or object to a safe level. Disinfecting means destroying germs on an inanimate surface or object. A sanitizer should be used on food contact surfaces or any object that is mouthed. A disinfectant should be used only on diaper changing tables, toilets, counter tops, door and cabinet handles. Only EPA approved products are acceptable, and all sanitizers and disinfectants must be used according to the instructions on the container in order to be safe.

Caring for our Children has issued a new recommendation for use of a diluted bleach solution for sanitizing and disinfecting because many brand name companies have changed their bleach solution and there is no longer a consistent solution across different brands. The new recommendation advises us to: use only EPA registered products for sanitizing and disinfecting; follow the manufacturer's instructions for diluting the bleach solution and for the required contact time.

### Accessibility

Materials should be stored on low, open, uncrowded shelves. Materials should be stored in bins or containers that clearly show what is inside, such as a see-through container or container label with a picture of what is inside. If materials are stored in containers, they should be without lids. If lids are used they should be easy to open and close by all children. Containers must not be too heavy that children cannot remove them independently from shelves. Materials must not be stored in such a way that bins must be tipped over rather than removed from the shelf by children or large heavy items stored above the children heads when playing.

*For materials to be counted as accessible to children, they must be able to reach and use the materials for a period of 1 hour a day in a program of 8 hours or more. The 1 hour can be provided at one time or as a combination of several periods throughout the day. This does not mean that each child must have a full hour to use the materials. However, it is required that children have a reasonable chance to use the materials at some time if they wish. Less time is required for programs operating less than 8 hours a day, with the amount of time calculated proportionally, based on the ratio of 1 hour for programs of 8 hours or more. For example, if a program operated for 6 hours a day, this would be  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a full-day program, so the time required would be  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the 1 hour. Use this chart to determine the approximate amount of time needed in programs operating less than 8 hours.*

Number of hours in operation	2 hours	3 hours	4 hours	5 hours	6 hours	7 hours
Approximate minutes required for accessibility	15	25	30	40	45	50

Materials are considered accessible only if it is observed that children freely access and are permitted to use most of the materials. If programs limit the amount of children in areas they must ensure that all children have a reasonable opportunity to access materials for a substantial portion of the day. A reasonable opportunity requires that materials are accessible throughout the day, both indoors and outdoors. If children request access to materials and are prevented from using them there must be other opportunities to use the same materials in other areas or other times of the day to receive credit. Some materials may not be accessible during the observation. For example; sand and water play may only be available in the afternoon. However the materials must be available for 1 hour to receive credit for "accessible" or 1/3 of the day to receive credit for "substantial portion of the day. Additional questions may be needed to gain information on other times of the day. Keep in mind that non-mobile infants do not have access to the materials if they are not placed within easy reach of the infant. For programs operating more than 5 hours a day, in order to meet much of the day there should be no significant extended periods of time where structured activities prevent access to materials. Access must be observed throughout the day.

Levels of quality build expectations from minimal to good to excellent. Consider not only the requirements of the indicator, but the level of quality documented as general practice throughout the observation.

### **Supervision**

Keep in mind that you can only count the positive interactions from the staff that are regularly scheduled to work in a classroom with the children that are being observed. Only the negative interactions of other adults can be considered. In addition, the children listed on the classroom roster can't be moved to another classroom during the assessment. If children are transferred during the assessment it must be called because it is no longer a valid assessment.

With regards to supervision, staff must be able to hear the child at all times, must be able to see the child with a quick glance, and must be able to physically respond immediately, leaving no child unattended. Special attention during high risk activities, such as eating, etc. are required to adequately protect children. The ages and developmental level of the children should also be taken into consideration during these activities to determine the level of supervision needed. (TN 1/1/08)

When children are required to participate in an activity or lose interest during the activity, and are not allowed to leave, participation is considered forced. Children may be encouraged to join an activity, but staff should be respectful of their cues and respond appropriately if any child loses interest.

### **Sanitizing**

Disinfectant and/or anti-bacterial wipes do not count for sanitization purposes. Products that can be given credit as sanitizing solutions are: bleach and water solution; or a commercial product that states on the label or manufacturer's products sheet it kills 99.9% of germs, kills HIV virus, or is an EPA registered product. All commercial products used for sanitizing must be used according to manufacturer's instruction. Play materials that come into contact with bodily fluids must be cleaned and sanitized after each child's use. Toys that do not come into contact with bodily fluids should be sanitized weekly or when visibly soiled (page 106 Caring for Our Children.)

Caring for our Children has issued a new recommendation for use of a diluted bleach solution for sanitizing and disinfecting because many brand name companies have changed their bleach solution and there is no longer a consistent solution across different brands. The new recommendation advises us to: use only EPA registered products for sanitizing and disinfecting; follow the manufacturer's instructions for diluting the bleach solution and for the required contact time. Programs that use a sanitizing and/or disinfecting solution that is not bleach must get approval from their local sanitarian and have proof of

approval on site at all times. Approval MUST include use for eating surfaces, diapering/toileting, handwashing surfaces, and sanitizing toys. If approval is not given for all of the above listed instances, then the approval must outline what is approved for use.

### **Substantial Portion of the Day**

The substantial portion of the day is the amount of time certain areas and materials must be accessible to the children (Ex. A preschool program operating from 7:30-5:30 serves children for 10 hours. The substantial portion of the day for them is 3 hours and 20 minutes.) Meaning, children must have access to those materials or area of the classroom for 3 hours and 20 minutes each day where substantial portion of the day is mentioned in the indicator.

Items to be omitted from MT scoring: #38, #39, #40, #41, #42, #43

## **Specific Notes for ECERS-R**

### **1. Indoor Space**

#### **Indicator 1.1:**

Base space needs on largest number of children attending at one time.

Base score of this item only on the observed functioning of the space in the room used by the group most of the day. "Insufficient space" means not enough space. Score "yes" only if room is extremely crowded. "Sufficient space" means enough space to function adequately. Do not give credit for 3.1 if adequate space is due to lack of basic furnishings and equipment. If a classroom is terribly noisy, so that conversations are difficult and noise levels are obviously uncomfortable for classroom users, then do not give credit for adequate sound-absorbing materials, even if a number of such materials are present (rugs, ceiling tiles). If noise typically is not at a comfortable level, for whatever reason, the sound absorbing materials are not effective enough. This is true even if the noise is not actually coming from within the classroom being observed.

#### **Indicator 1.2:**

Base score of this item only on the observed functioning of the space in the room used by the group most of the day. "Insufficient space" means not enough space. Score "yes" only if room is extremely crowded. "Sufficient space" means enough space to function adequately. Do not give credit for 3.1 if adequate space is due to lack of basic furnishings and equipment. If a classroom is terribly noisy, so that conversations are difficult and noise levels are obviously uncomfortable for classroom users, then do not give credit for adequate sound-absorbing materials, even if a number of such materials are present (rugs, ceiling tiles). If noise typically is not at a comfortable level, for whatever reason, the sound absorbing materials are not effective enough. This is true even if the noise is not actually coming from within the classroom being observed.

#### **Indicator 1.3:**

"Poor repair" means that there are major repair problems that present health and/or safety risks.

#### **Indicator 3.1:**

Base score of this item only on the observed functioning of the space in the room used by the group most of the day. "Insufficient space" means not enough space. Score "yes" only if room is extremely crowded. "Sufficient space" means enough space to function adequately. Do not give credit for 3.1 if adequate space is due to lack of basic furnishings and equipment. If a classroom is terribly noisy, so that conversations are difficult and noise levels are obviously uncomfortable for classroom users, then do not give credit for adequate sound-absorbing materials, even if a number of such materials are present (rugs, ceiling tiles). If noise typically is not at a comfortable level, for whatever reason, the sound absorbing

materials are not effective enough. This is true even if the noise is not actually coming from within the classroom being observed.

**Indicator 3.2:**

Base score of this item only on the observed functioning of the space in the room used by the group most of the day. "Insufficient space" means not enough space. Score "yes" only if room is extremely crowded. "Sufficient space" means enough space to function adequately. Do not give credit for 3.1 if adequate space is due to lack of basic furnishings and equipment. If a classroom is terribly noisy, so that conversations are difficult and noise levels are obviously uncomfortable for classroom users, then do not give credit for adequate sound-absorbing materials, even if a number of such materials are present (rugs, ceiling tiles). If noise typically is not at a comfortable level, for whatever reason, the sound absorbing materials are not effective enough. This is true even if the noise is not actually coming from within the classroom being observed.

**Montana Note**

There must be a sound barrier between classrooms; such as a wall.

**Indicator 3.4:**

It is expected that there will be some messiness from the regular activities of the day. "Reasonably clean" means that there is evidence of daily maintenance, such as floors being swept and mopped, and that big messes, such as a juice spill, are cleaned up promptly.

**Indicator 3.5:**

In order for the indoor space to be considered minimally acceptable, it must be accessible to children and adults with disabilities who are currently a part of the program. If no children or adults with disabilities are currently part of the program, score NA for indicator 3.5. However, for a score of 5, accessibility is required regardless of whether or not individuals with disabilities are involved in the program. Therefore only a score of N or Y is allowed for 5.3.

**Indicator 5.1:**

To assess whether indoor space is "ample," consider the various activity areas as well as routine care areas. For example, look to see if the block or housekeeping area allows plenty of free movement for children to play, as well as for storage and use of the materials and equipment needed in the area. Do not give credit for ample space if at least two activity areas are crowded, even if there is ample space for routines.

**Indicator 5.2:**

**Montana Note**

The natural light must be in the space(s) used for child care for more than 50% of the time children are allowed to attend. Natural light is not required in spaces used for nap, but those spaces must have enough light to allow adequate visual supervision of the children.

**Indicator 5.3:**

In order for the indoor space to be considered minimally acceptable, it must be accessible to children and adults with disabilities who are currently a part of the program. If no children or adults with disabilities are currently part of the program, score NA for indicator 3.5. However, for a score of 5, accessibility is required regardless of whether or not individuals with disabilities are involved in the program. Therefore only a score of N or Y is allowed for 5.3.

To give credit for this indicator, the classroom and the bathroom (including toilet stalls) must be accessible to individuals with disabilities. Doorways must be 32 inches wide. The door handles must be operable with limited use of hands. The entrance door threshold should be ½" high or less and, if over ¼", must be beveled to make it easier to roll over. However, access to the various play areas in the room is considered under Item 4. Room arrangement for play, and not in this item. Adaptations to toilets (Ex., bars to help with stability) are considered in Item 2, indicators 3.3 & 5.3.

If there are 2 or more bathrooms used by the children in the classroom, only one of them must be accessible. Accessibility to the building itself, and to the floor where the classroom is located, is also considered under this indicator. The definition of accessible should be based on the information in this note, with no additional requirements.

**Indicator 7.2:**

Doors to outside count as ventilation control only if they can be left open without posing a safety threat (for example, if they have a locking screen door or safety gate to keep children from leaving the room unattended).

**Montana Note**

Ventilation should be able to be controlled in all spaces used for children (e.g. through heating/air conditioning systems, windows, opening doors, ceiling fans. Etc)

**2. Furniture for routine care, play, and learning**

**Item 2:**

Remember to consider furnishings for play, and not just routine care furnishings, when scoring all indicators in this item. Basic furniture: tables and chairs used for meals/snacks and activities; mats or cots for rest or nap; cubbies or other storage for children's things; low open shelves for play/learning materials. To be given credit for low open shelves, they must be used for toys and materials that children can reach by themselves.

**Indicator 1.1:**

"Insufficient basic furniture" means not enough or an insufficient number of pieces of the basic furniture needed for routines, play, and learning listed in the notes for clarification. If most of the toys are stored in crates or toy boxes and there are very few open shelves, a score of "Yes" is appropriate.

**Montana Note**

To give credit, furniture must be used for routine care, and not simply be present – not used for other purposes.

Sleeping provisions for individual use only. Couches and other shared spaces are not acceptable sleeping provisions due to cross-contamination.

To give credit for shelves, they must be used for storing materials that the children can reach and use. There should be enough low, open organized storage –shelves, containers, or crates – as long as the storage allows easy access without excessive crowding or rummaging for toys.

**Indicator 3.1:**

When determining whether furniture for routine care is sufficient, consider the sizes of cubbies in relation to what is stored in them to see if they can adequately accommodate all of each child's possessions. Each child enrolled in the group must have an individual cubby that is not shared with anyone else, with space for all possessions to be stored there. This is to reduce the spread of lice and scabies. When children's personal belonging, such as coats, extra clothing, blankets (if stored in cubbies,) are not reasonably well-separated, or if cubbies are so full that things fall onto the floor, score 3.1 "No" because the cubbies are not adequate in size based on what must be stored in them. If there is only minor touching of possessions (e.g., protruding sleeves of winter coats touching those of other children, or a small problem with other materials, but this could be solved easily by pushing things into the cubby properly, consider the cubbies adequate. Any touching of children's personal possessions should also be considered in the Health item.

**Montana Note**

To give credit, furniture must be used for routine care, and not simply be present – not used for other purposes.

Sleeping provisions for individual use only. Couches and other shared spaces are not acceptable sleeping provisions due to cross-contamination.

To give credit for shelves, they must be used for storing materials that the children can reach and use. There should be enough low, open organized storage –shelves, containers, or crates – as long as the storage allows easy access without excessive crowding or rummaging for toys.

Credit can't be given for this indicator if the children's bedding is touching due to cross- contamination.

Siblings cannot share cubbies

**Indicator 3.2:**

Sturdiness is a property of the furniture itself (i.e., will not break, fall over, or collapse when used). If sturdy furniture is placed so that it can be easily knocked over, this is a problem with safety (see Item 14. Safety practices), not the sturdiness of the furniture.

**Montana Note**

When picnic tables are used, consider how comfortable they are for the children and whether children can sit safely. If only one child has difficulty, or the furniture is used infrequently as compared to the other furnishings being considered for this indicator, do not score "no." If table and chairs cause safety risks, consider this in Item 12 Safety.

**Indicator 3.3:**

If there are no children with disabilities enrolled or if children with disabilities do not need adaptive furniture, mark NA for 3.3 and 5.3.

**Indicator 5.1:**

This indicator only addresses the size of tables and chairs for children. If cubbies or other furnishings present problems due to size, consider this under 7.1.

While seated back in a chair, children's feet should be able to touch the floor (not necessarily rest flat on the floor); children should not have to perch on edge of chair to touch floor. Children also need to be able to rest their elbows on the table and fit their knees comfortably under the table. Rate here also if chairs and/or tables are too small for the children. Check child-sized several times during observation, including when all children are seated together, such as at lunch. If 75% of children are able to use child-sized tables and chairs, give credit for this indicator.

Since children are different sizes at different ages, the intent here is that furniture should be the right size for the children in care. Furniture that is smaller than adult-sized may be the right size for a 6- or 7-year-old, but not small enough for a 2- or 3-year-old.

**Indicator 5.2:**

Don't be overly perfectionistic when scoring this indicator. If there is only a very minor problem that does not create a likely safety hazard, then give credit. For example, if a chair or table is slightly wobbly, but will not collapse or cause falls, or if a vinyl-covered couch is slightly worn, but foam is not exposed, then do not count off for these small things, unless there are a substantial number of small problems causing an overall impression of poor repair.

**Indicator 5.3:**

If there are no children with disabilities enrolled or if children with disabilities do not need adaptive furniture, mark NA for 3.3 and 5.3.

**Indicator 7.1:**

Cubbies for storage of children's possessions must be in the classroom to be considered convenient, because of difficulties with supervision.

**Indicator 7.2:**

In order to give credit, it is not necessary to see the furnishing being used, but it must be obvious that it is used for the appropriate activity and not, for example, only for storage. If unsure, ask staff how and when furnishing is used.

**3. Furnishings for relaxation and comfort****Item 3:**

“Furnishings for relaxation and comfort” means softness provided for children during learning and play activities. Routine care furnishings such as cots, blankets, and pillows used for naps are not considered when scoring this item.

**Indicator 1.1:**

See “Explanation of Terms Used Throughout the Scale” on pp. 6–7 for the definition of “accessible.”

**Indicator 1.2:**

Examples of soft toys include cloth puppets (even if they have hard heads or hands), dolls that are completely soft or that have soft bodies, and soft toy animals of all sizes, from those that can be held in one hand to large animals children can sit or lie on.

**Indicator 3.1:**

“Some soft furnishings” means that there are at least two soft furnishings in the room being observed that the children may use in play.

**Montana Note**

The floor covering must be large enough to permit at least one child to stretch out and lounge comfortably on the area with several toys to play with.

**Indicator 3.2:**

“Some soft toys accessible” means at least three soft toys are accessible to children.

**Montana Note**

When counting the numbers of soft toys, individual pieces belonging to a soft toy that has various pieces, can only count as one example, even though the individual parts might be what a child uses.

**Indicator 5.1:**

A “cozy area” is a clearly defined space with a substantial amount of softness where children may lounge, daydream, read, or play quietly. For example, it might consist of a soft rug with several cushions, an upholstered couch, or a covered mattress with cushions. The cozy area must provide a substantial amount of softness for the children. This means that the cozy furnishings must allow a child to completely escape the normal hardness of the typical early childhood classroom. One small thing, in itself, does not create a cozy area. For example, a small padded chair, small child-sized beanbag chair, a few small stuffed animals, or a carpeted corner, are each not enough by themselves. However, credit could be given for a combination of such furnishings. Credit might be given for large furnishings, such as a mattress, couch, or adult-sized bean bag chair if they provide the required substantial amount of softness.

See “Explanation of Terms Used Throughout the Scale” on p. 7 for the definition of “a substantial portion of the day.”

If there are two or more cozy areas, each area does not need to meet the requirements of 5.1 and 5.2. However, there must always be one area, providing a substantial amount of softness where children can depend on being able to relax, that is not used for active physical play. It must be obvious that a child who wants to use a cozy area will not be constantly interrupted by children involved in active play. A combination of all areas can be used to judge whether a cozy area is accessible for a substantial portion of the day.

**Indicator 5.2:**

If there are two or more cozy areas, each area does not need to meet the requirements of 5.1 and 5.2. However, there must always be one area, providing a substantial amount of softness where children can depend on being able to relax, that is not used for active physical play. It must be obvious that a child who wants to use a cozy area will not be constantly interrupted by children involved in active play. A combination of all areas can be used to judge whether a cozy area is accessible for a substantial portion of the day.

The cozy area may be used for short periods as a group space (e.g., for dancing or circle time), but it should be protected from active play for most of the day. It should be away from active play equipment and have protection from active children (through placement or a barrier). It should not be located where there is a lot of traffic. Staff should be diligent to ensure that active children do not interfere with a child in the cozy area by jumping on or running into the child who is relaxing.

**Montana Note**

The intent of this indicator is that children should not be interrupted or disturbed when using the soft furnishings credited in 5.1. If children walk, or even run, past without disturbing the child, then this is acceptable.

**Indicator 5.3:**

Look especially to see that there are no tears in the covers of beanbag chairs, cushions, and couches that expose the padding or stuffing. "Most soft furnishings" means almost all, with only one or two minor exceptions.

**Indicator 7.1:**

Give credit only for additional soft furnishings that can be used during play. If there is carpet under tables that cannot be used to sit or play on, credit cannot be given for soft furnishings.

**Indicator 7.2:**

"Many" means enough soft toys so that children do not have to compete over them: for 2's and 3's at least two soft toys for each child; 4's and K's at least 10 toys or, if more than 20 children are allowed to attend at one time, enough for half the group size allowed.

**Montana Note**

When counting the numbers of soft toys, individual pieces belonging to a soft toy that has various pieces, can only count as one example, even though the individual parts might be what a child uses.

**4. Room arrangement for play****Indicator 1.1:**

An interest center is an area where materials, organized by type, are stored so that they are accessible to children, and appropriately furnished play space is provided for children to participate in a particular kind of play. Examples of interest centers are art activities, blocks, dramatic play, reading, nature/science, and manipulatives/fine motor.

**Indicator 1.2:**

A room arrangement that is divided into interest areas or centers, using shelves or other furniture, can be given credit as being "not difficult to supervise visually" as long as teachers move about the spaces used by the children so that they can see each child frequently enough to ensure that each child is safe, and so that they can interact with children when needed. Credit can be given even though they may not see all children at all times. However, the ages, abilities, and impulsiveness of the children must be considered when scoring. Older, less impulsive children require less visual supervision than younger or more impulsive children. In addition, slight problems with the room shape, for example, a slight extension, (not a full L- shape) of the room, or the existence of pillars, that create small blind areas are acceptable as long as they are well-supervised frequently enough to meet children's needs. To score, observe the



relationship between the teachers' supervision and the room arrangement to see if children are adequately supervised visually.

**Montana Note**

If there are two staff members in the room during the observation, but only 1 staff member at other times, this should be considered in scoring the item , as there may be issues that arise with only one staff in the room.

It is not enough to simply position staff around the room. The caregivers must be able to see the space well enough at all times to ensure that it is possible to use effective, child-appropriate discipline to meet the safety needs of all of the children at all times; no matter where the child(ren) are in the classroom.

**Indicator 3.1:**

An interest center is an area where materials, organized by type, are stored so that they are accessible to children, and appropriately furnished play space is provided for children to participate in a particular kind of play. Examples of interest centers are art activities, blocks, dramatic play, reading, nature/science, and manipulatives/fine motor.

**Indicator 3.2:**

A room arrangement that is divided into interest areas or centers, using shelves or other furniture, can be given credit as being "not difficult to supervise visually" as long as teachers move about the spaces used by the children so that they can see each child frequently enough to ensure that each child is safe, and so that they can interact with children when needed. Credit can be given even though they may not see all children at all times. However, the ages, abilities, and impulsiveness of the children must be considered when scoring. Older, less impulsive children require less visual supervision than younger or more impulsive children. In addition, slight problems with the room shape, for example, a slight extension, (not a full L- shape) of the room, or the existence of pillars, that create small blind areas are acceptable as long as they are well-supervised frequently enough to meet children's needs. To score, observe the relationship between the teachers' supervision and the room arrangement to see if children are adequately supervised visually.

**Montana Note**

If there are two staff members in the room during the observation, but only 1 staff member at other times, this should be considered in scoring the item , as there may be issues that arise with only one staff in the room.

It is not enough to simply position staff around the room. The caregivers must be able to see the space well enough at all times to ensure that it is possible to use effective, child-appropriate discipline to meet the safety needs of all of the children at all times; no matter where the child(ren) are in the classroom.

**Indicator 3.3:**

Look to see that there is space enough for at least three different types of activities to go on at the same time for some period of the day.

**Indicator 5.1:**

An interest center is an area where materials, organized by type, are stored so that they are accessible to children, and appropriately furnished play space is provided for children to participate in a particular kind of play. Examples of interest centers are art activities, blocks, dramatic play, reading, nature/science, and manipulatives/fine motor.

**Indicator 5.2:**

Look for a separation in physical space, actual distance between active or noisy centers and the more quiet centers. A barrier, such as open shelves, does not sufficiently cut down on noise. To give credit, all quiet areas must be separated from noisy areas.

**Indicator 7.1:**

An interest center is an area where materials, organized by type, are stored so that they are accessible to children, and appropriately furnished play space is provided for children to participate in a particular kind of play. Examples of interest centers are art activities, blocks, dramatic play, reading, nature/science, and manipulatives/fine motor.

**Indicator 7.2:**

To get credit for this indicator, almost all materials in all centers must be organized for independent use. Labels are not required in all areas. Other examples that apply are shelves not overcrowded, see-through or labeled containers used to store toys, materials such as puzzles and games easy to take off shelves, sets of materials in bins when needed, and containers with tops easily opened by children.

**5. Space for Privacy****Item 5:**

The intent of space for privacy is to give children relief from the pressures of group life. Isolation from the group as a punishment is not given credit under this item. A place where one or two children can play protected from intrusion by other children, yet be supervised by staff, is considered space for privacy. Private space can be created by using physical barriers such as book shelves; by enforcing the rule that children may not interrupt one another; by limiting the number of children working at a table placed in an out-of-traffic area. Examples of space for privacy are a small loft area; activity centers where use is limited to one or two children; a large cardboard box with cut-out windows, door, and a cushion inside; a small outdoor play house. (For a definition of space for privacy see All About the ECERS-R, pp. 35, 39, 40.)

**Indicator 3.2:**

For a definition of space for privacy see All About the ECERS-R, pp. 35, 39, 40.

All spaces used for privacy must be easily supervised by staff.

Any space for privacy that a child uses is considered easily supervised by staff if the space is open enough to allow visual supervision. It is not required that the teachers can see the space(s) at all times, as long as teachers move about the room and can see the spaces for privacy used by the children frequently enough to ensure that each child is safe. To score, observe the relationship between the teachers' supervision and how spaces for privacy are used to see if children are adequately supervised. The ages, abilities, and impulsiveness of the children must be considered when scoring. Older, less impulsive children require less visual supervision than younger or more impulsive children.

**Montana Note**

To score, consider supervision and how spaces for privacy are used to see if children are adequately supervised. The ages, abilities, and impulsiveness of the children must be considered when scoring. Older, less impulsive children require less visual supervision than younger or more impulsive children. It is not enough to simply position staff around the room. The caregivers must be able to see the space well enough at all times to ensure that it is possible to use effective, child-appropriate discipline to meet the safety needs of all of the children at all times; no matter where the child(ren) are in the classroom.

**Indicator 5.1:**

Staff must enforce the protection rule, if needed, in order to be given credit for this indicator.

**Indicator 5.2:**

This indicator applies only to the space "set aside" for privacy in 5.1. If credit is not given for 5.1, then credit cannot be given for 5.2.

**Indicator 7.2:**

“Staff” here refers to the regular teaching staff in the room. Specialists who come into the room specifically to work with one or two children do not count for this indicator. See “Explanation of Terms Used Throughout the Scale” on p. 7 for definition of staff.

**6. Child related display****Item 6:**

Labels on shelves indicating where materials are to be stored and center labels or signs do not count as display.

**Montana Note**

Decorative mirrors can be considered as part of the display if they are intentionally placed at the eye level of the majority of the children in care and are meant to be used by the children.

**Indicator 1.2:**

Materials must be meaningful to the children to be considered appropriate. Score “Yes” if over 50% of the display in the room is inappropriate for over 50% of the children or if any of the displayed materials show violence or indicate prejudice.

**Indicator 3.1:**

“Appropriate” means suitable for the developmental level of the age group and the individual abilities of the children. This concept is also referred to as developmentally appropriate and is used in a number of items in the scale. Consider only the display in the room(s) where children spend the majority of the time. Score “Yes” if 75% of display is appropriate for the children, and none is violent or prejudicial.

**Montana Note**

If the display depicts violent scenarios or is scary in nature than credit can’t be given; for example skeletons chasing someone, characters with fangs.

**Indicator 3.2:**

“Some” means that at least two pieces of children’s work are displayed and can be easily seen by children.

**Indicator 5.1:**

“Much of the display” means about 30% of the materials displayed. The first part of this indicator requires that a relationship exist between what is displayed and the activities that the current group of children is experiencing. The intent here is for the teacher to use the display for children as a teaching tool that changes as topics of interest change and that adds more information to the children’s experiences. For instance, if the group is talking about the season of the year, a science project they are doing, or an upcoming field trip, these things should be represented in the display. Recently completed artwork that does not relate to other things going on in the room does not count for this indicator. If needed, supplement observed information by asking if any of the display relates to topics of interest covered within the last month.

The second part of this indicator requires that the children themselves be represented in the display. Look to see if there are photos of the children in the group on display, or self-portraits, or a height-chart with names. Photos of the children are not required, but the display should relate to the children in the group (e.g., stories dictated by children, charts done with children’s input).

**Montana Note**

Child-created display meets the intent of the entire indicator.

**Indicator 5.2:**

Base score on overall impression of whether children's art is well represented in the display. Consider what you feel when you have looked around the room from various areas. Counting number of pieces of artwork is not necessary. If 50/50, or too close to tell, give credit for most of the display done by children. If a detailed search is needed to find the children's work, then do not give credit.

**Indicator 7.1:**

Score "Yes" if more than 50% of children's displayed work is individualized. Individualized work means that each child has selected the subject and/or media and has carried out the work in his or her own creative way. Thus, individualized products look quite different from one another. Projects where children follow a teacher's example and little creativity is allowed are not considered individualized work. (See All About the ECERS-R, pp. 51, 52, 53 for further definition of individualized.)

**Indicator 7.2:**

"Three-dimensional" work must have height, width, and depth. The children must be able to build up and out as they make "junk," styrofoam, or wood sculptures, or use clay or play-dough (but not as in using cookie cutters with play-dough). Gluing things to a flat surface (as in gluing material scraps or styrofoam "peanuts" to a flat piece of paper or cardboard) is not counted as 3-D.

**7. Space for gross motor play****Item 7:**

In assessing space for gross motor play, include both outdoor and indoor areas, except where only one is specified in an indicator. All areas regularly available and/or used for gross motor activities should be considered in scoring this item, even if children are not observed in the area.

**Montana Note**

This indicator looks at space for play and not equipment

For a more detailed listing of Playground Safety Hazards, refer to the Playground Safety Sheet

**Indicator 1.2:**

**Montana Note:** Lofts are considered indoor climbing equipment. Scores are based on hazards present such as; height, entrapment issues, fall zones, insufficient cushioning, how it is used, ages of children, and supervision.

**Indicator 1.2:**

Although no gross motor area that challenges children can ever be completely safe, the intent of this indicator is that major causes of serious injury are minimized, such as injury from falls onto inadequate cushioning surfaces, or entrapment, pinching of body parts, and protrusions from non-gross motor equipment that is in the space. Safety of the equipment is covered in Item 8. Gross motor equipment. Issues related to safety of the space (not the gross motor equipment) is considered in this item. Fall zones, with required cushioning surfaces are considered part of the space (not equipment), and thus considered here. Height and velocity of falls should be considered when determining whether a fall zone with cushioning surface is needed. Anything permitted by the staff to be used for stimulating active play that could lead to a fall with serious consequences must have an adequate fall zone.

Note that the requirements for verifying the resilience of materials not covered in the chart on Playground Information in All About the ECERS-R on pp. 62 and 63, such as poured or installed foam or rubber surfaces, is as follows: the child care provider must provide written proof of meeting ASTM 1292 requirements for the material used under equipment.

Although the Consumer Product Safety Commission Guidelines for cushioning surfaces and fall zones apply only to anchored equipment, for purposes of scoring, these standards should be applied to anything

used for gross motor play, in which falls onto inadequate cushioning surfaces can occur. (See All About the ECERS-R, pp. 57–67 for further information.)

Any non-gross motor equipment that is in the space (such as fences, storage sheds, air conditioning units, dramatic play structures, benches, picnic tables, water play areas) must also be assessed in this item, for safety problems they might pose, such as protrusions on low fences, obstructions in a trike path or accessibility to dangerous objects.

#### **Montana Note**

When there are more than 3 minor hazards or if there are 1 serious hazards outdoors, credit cannot not be given at the one level. If there are no serious hazards and no more than 3 minor hazards credit can be given in the three level. Lack of resilient surfacing, equipment spacing, etc. may be considered as major hazards depending on the measurements and whether or not serious injury could result. If it is observed that children are using playground equipment that is required to be on a resilient surface and the surfacing is covered with ice and snow credit can't be given due to the serious safety risk.

Indoor space for gross motor play and equipment is not held to the same standards as outside; however, safety as the primary focus should be insured. Consider the placement of equipment as well as the surface under equipment where children might fall. If indoor children's climbing equipment is used, mats or carpet are required to be placed under the equipment if it is over 12 inches in height. This is in reference to equipment specifically for climbing.

#### **Indicator 3.1:**

"Some space" means that indoor and/or outdoor space is used for gross motor play by the children in the group for at least 1 hour each day in a program operating 4 or more hours per day. In programs operating less than 8 hours a day, see Explanation of Terms Used Throughout the Scale, on page 7 to determine amount of time required for part day programs of less than 8 hours.

#### **Indicator 3.2**

**Montana Note:** Lofts are considered indoor climbing equipment. Scores are based on hazards present such as; height, entrapment issues, fall zones, insufficient cushioning, how it is used, ages of children, and supervision.

#### **Indicator 3.2:**

Although no gross motor area that challenges children can ever be completely safe, the intent of this indicator is that major causes of serious injury are minimized, such as injury from falls onto inadequate cushioning surfaces, or entrapment, pinching of body parts, and protrusions from non-gross motor equipment that is in the space. Safety of the equipment is covered in Item 8. Gross motor equipment. Issues related to safety of the space (not the gross motor equipment) is considered in this item. Fall zones, with required cushioning surfaces are considered part of the space (not equipment), and thus considered here. Height and velocity of falls should be considered when determining whether a fall zone with cushioning surface is needed. Anything permitted by the staff to be used for stimulating active play that could lead to a fall with serious consequences must have an adequate fall zone.

Note that the requirements for verifying the resilience of materials not covered in the chart on Playground Information in All About the ECERS-R on pp. 62 and 63, such as poured or installed foam or rubber surfaces, is as follows: the child care provider must provide written proof of meeting ASTM 1292 requirements for the material used under equipment.

Although the Consumer Product Safety Commission Guidelines for cushioning surfaces and fall zones apply only to anchored equipment, for purposes of scoring, these standards should be applied to anything used for gross motor play, in which falls onto inadequate cushioning surfaces can occur. (See All About the ECERS-R, pp. 57–67 for further information.)

Any non-gross motor equipment that is in the space (such as fences, storage sheds, air conditioning units, dramatic play structures, benches, picnic tables, water play areas) must also be assessed in this item, for safety problems they might pose, such as protrusions on low fences, obstructions in a trike path or accessibility to dangerous objects.

A space can be considered generally safe even if it cannot be easily supervised. The ability to supervise space is not considered in this item, but in Item 29. Supervision of gross motor activities. Consider all spaces used at any time for gross motor play including hallways, covered patios, parking lots, and so forth.

#### **Montana Note**

When there are more than 3 minor hazards or if there are 1 serious hazards outdoors, credit cannot not be given at the one level. If there are no serious hazards and no more than 3 minor hazards credit can be given in the three level. Lack of resilient surfacing, equipment spacing, etc. may be considered as major hazards depending on the measurements and whether or not serious injury could result. If it is observed that children are using playground equipment that is required to be on a resilient surface and the surfacing is covered with ice and snow credit can't be given due to the serious safety risk.

Indoor space for gross motor play and equipment is not held to the same standards as outside; however, safety as the primary focus should be insured. Consider the placement of equipment as well as the surface under equipment where children might fall. If indoor children's climbing equipment is used, mats or carpet are required to be placed under the equipment if it is over 12 inches in height. This is in reference to equipment specifically for climbing.

#### **Indicator 5.1:**

For a rating of 5, space must be adequate for the size of the group using the area. Find out if class groups rotate or if several groups use the space at the same time. Some indoor space must be available for use for gross motor play, especially in bad weather. This space may usually be used for other activities. Classroom space or hallways can count as "some indoor space," but only if the space is reasonably large and open (through moving furniture, if necessary). In some areas, where the climate is never extreme for long periods and a covered outdoor area can be used year-round, this can also count as some indoor space. When required by environmental conditions (e.g., extreme weather or pollution; dangerous social conditions), facilities may be given credit for this indicator if they have adequate space indoors and some space outdoors.

#### **Indicator 5.3:**

To score this indicator, observe to see that the various activities in the gross motor space do not interfere with each other (e.g., that children are not in great danger of tripping over toys as they run across the space, that children coming down a slide will not bump into anything, or that wheel toys do not usually go through areas with other types of play and "run people down.")

#### **Indicator 7.1:**

At least one hard and one soft play surface large enough to permit a type of play must be accessible daily outdoors.

#### **Indicator 7.2:**

Only one example of protection from the elements must be observed to give credit for 7.2. But the protection observed must match the most prevalent adverse conditions caused by the elements in the local area.

#### **Indicator 7.3:**

To give credit for 7.3, at least two convenient features must be observed.

## 8. Gross motor equipment

### Item 8:

"Gross motor equipment" includes anything provided for or regularly permitted by the staff to be used for stimulating gross motor activity. This includes manufactured, custom-made, and/or natural objects used for climbing, sliding, balancing, or other gross motor activity. It does not include objects meant to be used for other purposes, such as benches to sit on, shade trees, or shelves children are not supposed to climb, unless children are regularly permitted to use them as gross motor equipment. Categories of gross motor equipment: stationary equipment such as swings, slides, climbing equipment, overhead ladders; portable equipment such as balls and sports equipment, wheel toys, tumbling mats, jump ropes, bean bags, and ring toss game. When rating gross motor equipment, consider equipment both indoors and outdoors.

### Montana Note

This indicator looks at equipment and not space for gross motor play. Insufficient ground cover is marked off under Space for Gross Motor Play

For a more detailed listing of Playground Safety Hazards, refer to the Playground Safety Sheet.

### Indicator 1.3:

The safety of gross motor equipment is handled in this item, in terms of appropriateness and condition. Safety of fall zones, with cushioning surfaces, and all other hazards present in the space, are handled in Item 7. Space for gross motor play.

### Indicator 1.3:

**Montana Note:** Lofts are considered indoor climbing equipment. Scores are based on hazards present such as; height, entrapment issues, fall zones, insufficient cushioning, how it is used, ages of children, and supervision.

### Indicator 3.1:

Programs operating for at least 8 hours a day must have at least 1 hour of access to gross motor equipment daily. Less time is required for programs operating less than 8 hours a day, with the amount of time calculated proportionally, based on the ratio of 1 hour for programs of 8 hours or more. In programs operating less than 8 hours a day, see Explanation of Terms Used Throughout the Scale, on page 7 to determine amount of time required for part day programs of less than 8 hours.

"Some" means that all children can have access to equipment, during the gross motor time.

### Montana Note

Inclement weather- Taken from Caring for Our Children National Health and Safety Performance Standards -Children shall play outdoors daily when weather and air quality conditions do not pose a significant health risk. Outdoor play for infants may include riding in a carriage or stroller; however, infants shall be offered opportunities for gross motor play outdoors, as well.

Weather that poses a significant health risk shall include wind chill at or below 15 degrees F and heat index at or above 90 degrees F, as identified by the National Weather Service.

Air quality conditions that pose a significant health risk shall be identified by announcements from local health authorities or through ozone alerts. Such air quality conditions shall require that children remain indoors where air conditioners ventilate indoor air to the outdoors. Children with respiratory health problems such as asthma shall not play outdoors when local health authorities announce that the air quality is approaching unhealthy levels.

When there are more than 3 minor hazards or if there are 1 serious hazards outdoors, credit cannot not be given at the one level. If there are no serious hazards and no more than 3 minor hazards credit can be

given in the three level. Lack of resilient surfacing, equipment spacing, etc. may be considered as major hazards depending on the measurements and whether or not serious injury could result.

**Indicator 3.2:**

The safety of gross motor equipment is handled in this item, in terms of appropriateness and condition. Safety of fall zones, with cushioning surfaces, and all other hazards present in the space, are handled in Item 7. Space for gross motor play.

**Indicator 3.3:**

The safety of gross motor equipment is handled in this item, in terms of appropriateness and condition. Safety of fall zones, with cushioning surfaces, and all other hazards present in the space, are handled in Item 7. Space for gross motor play.

In a mixed-aged group, appropriate equipment must be available for the different abilities represented. Consider especially the appropriateness of the stationary equipment such as climbers, since they are permanent installations and always accessible. "Most" means 75% of the stationary equipment is suitable for the age and ability of the children being observed.

**Indicator 3.3**

**Montana Note:** Lofts are considered indoor climbing equipment. Scores are based on hazards present such as; height, entrapment issues, fall zones, insufficient cushioning, how it is used, ages of children, and supervision.

**Indicator 5.1:**

"Enough" means that children have interesting options for gross motor play and do not have to wait long periods of time to use the equipment they choose to use. Consider both portable and stationary equipment.

**Indicator 5.2:**

To meet the requirement for a "variety of skills," the equipment children can use should stimulate the development of 7–9 different skills. Generally 1 piece of equipment will not provide this variety, but in the case of a very complex climber the indicator might be true. Other skills, besides those listed in the example, might include pulling/pushing, hanging by arms, swinging, jumping, hopping, using a jump rope, operating a hula hoop, tossing things into containers, catching, throwing, or kicking. Observe to see how many skills the equipment encourages and list them. Consider both portable and stationary equipment.

**Montana Note**

This requires daily access to at least 7-9 skills; however, on days with inclement weather there should be at least 3-5 skills.

**Indicator 5.3:**

Adaptations include physical modifications to existing equipment or specially designed equipment as well as help from staff to enable children with disabilities to have gross motor experiences similar to those of their peers. Score NA if no children requiring adaptations are enrolled in the group being observed.

**Indicator 7.1:**

"Portable" equipment means that the portability is part of the play potential for children (e.g., wheel toys, balls, jump ropes, hula hoops, roller skates, bats, tennis rackets). Equipment that children cannot or should not move as part of play is considered stationary, even though it may not be anchored, and therefore can be moved.

**Indicator 7.2:**

Consider ages of children and what challenges them to determine whether equipment stimulates skills on different levels.



This indicator looks at equipment and not space for gross motor play. Insufficient ground cover is marked off under Space for Gross Motor Play.

## **9. Greeting/departing**

### **Item 9:**

In case only a few children are observed being greeted (or departing), generalize based on that sample.

### **Indicator 1.1:**

Score “Yes” when children are usually (75% of the time) not acknowledged by staff, either verbally or non-verbally, either positively or neutrally, upon entering the classroom, or very soon after their arrival (within 1–2 minutes).

### **Montana Note**

The expectation is that the children are greeted before the parent leaves. It is important for the caregiver to acknowledge that the child is in their care and make them feel welcome.

To count as a greeting, the person being greeted must perceive the greeting. Simply saying hello, to a child/parent who does not notice that he or she has been spoken to, does not count as being greeted. There is no specific definition of a “warm” greeting, but the recipient must perceive the interaction as being positive and welcoming. The greeting can be verbal or through welcoming body language, such as a smile that the parent/child responds to, or a hug for a child. Simply taking a child from a parent, without an obvious warm interaction that is perceived by the child, would not count as a greeting, even though the provider might physically hold the child.

### **Indicator 3.1:**

“Most” requires that at least 75% of the children are greeted warmly, and any new staff member greets the children as well.

### **Montana Note**

The expectation is that the children are greeted before the parent leaves. It is important for the caregiver to acknowledge that the child is in their care and make them feel welcome.

To count as a greeting, the person being greeted must perceive the greeting. Simply saying hello, to a child/parent who does not notice that he or she has been spoken to, does not count as being greeted. There is no specific definition of a “warm” greeting, but the recipient must perceive the interaction as being positive and welcoming. The greeting can be verbal or through welcoming body language, such as a smile that the parent/child responds to, or a hug for a child. Simply taking a child from a parent, without an obvious warm interaction that is perceived by the child, would not count as a greeting, even though the provider might physically hold the child.

### **Indicator 5.1:**

Observe greeting very carefully to see if each child is actually greeted, and that the greeting is personal and positive (e.g., caregiver makes eye contact and smiles, uses child’s real name or nickname, says something to child or asks something). (For suggestions on accurately assessing greeting and departing, see All About the ECERS-R, pp. 80–85).

### **Montana Note**

The expectation is that the children are greeted before the parent leaves. It is important for the caregiver to acknowledge that the child is in their care and make them feel welcome.

### **Indicator 5.3:**

To give credit, each parent does not have to be “greeted warmly” during the observation, but it must be obvious that, in general (approximately 75% of the time), parents are treated in this way.

If children are not brought to the program by their parents, mark NA for 5.3 and 7.3, and rate communication between parents and staff in Item 38. Provisions for parents.

**Indicator 7.1:**  
**Montana Note**

The expectation is that the children are greeted before the parent leaves. It is important for the caregiver to acknowledge that the child is in their care and make them feel welcome.

**Indicator 7.3:**

If children are not brought to the program by their parents, mark NA for 5.3 and 7.3, and rate communication between parents and staff in Item 38. Provisions for parents.

To give credit, each parent does not have to receive information from the staff at greeting and departing, but it must be observed that in general, parents are treated this way.

**Montana Note**

The sharing of child related information must happen as the child is being dropped off at the family child care home. To give credit, it is not necessary to observe the sharing of information by every parent, but it must obviously be the usual practice (at least 50% of the time), and be observed at least once unless no greeting is observed. When only one parent is observed being greeted, the sharing of information must be observed. If two parents are greeted, sharing of information must be observed in one of those greetings. If no greeting is observed, be sure to ask how this aspect of care is handled. The provider should elicit information from the parent if parents do not share information spontaneously.

## **10. Meals/ snacks**

**Indicator 1.1:**

**Montana Note**

Includes both hunger or thirsty ie. Child requests drink between meals.

Meals/snacks should be served to infants, toddlers, and preschoolers every 2-3 hours unless children are sleeping.

**Indicator 1.1, 3.1:**

**Montana Note**

With regard to drinking water being offered between meals/snacks to children, score “No” if during the observation water is not offered to at least some of the children who cannot access their own water. Also score “No” if water is not available to children who can ask for it or can get their own.

**Indicator 1.2:**

The intent of this indicator is to determine whether the correct components of a meal or snack are being served to the children. No analysis of the nutritional value of foods served is necessary. Use the USDA Meal Guidelines—ages 1–12, in All About the ECERS-R, p. 91, to determine whether the components are present. Personal dietary preferences of the assessor (e.g., preference for whole grain vs. white breads or fresh vs. canned vegetables) are not to be used in determining the quality of the foods served. As long as the required nutritionally adequate meals and snacks are served, within the acceptable timeframe (e.g., program less than or equal to 4 hours=1 meal or snack required; 4–6 hours=1 meal; 6–12 hours=2 meals and 1 snack or 2 snacks and 1 meal; more than 12 hours=2 snacks and 2 meals), credit can be given for 3.2. An occasional instance of not meeting the guidelines—for example, cupcakes for a birthday party instead of the scheduled snack—should not affect the rating. Any supplementary foods served in addition to the required meals/snacks do not have to meet the required components. Check menu for the

week in addition to observing food served. If no menu is available, ask the teacher to describe meals/snacks served for the past week.

### **Montana Note**

The intent of this indicator is to determine whether the correct components of a meal or snack are being served to children. No analysis of the nutritional value of foods is necessary. Use the Food Guide to determine whether the components are present. The guidelines also require ALL components be served together. Personal dietary preferences of the assessor (e.g., whole grain vs. white breads; fresh vs. canned vegetables, high vs. low sugar or fat content, etc.) are not to be used in determining the quality of foods served. Foods that are perishable should not be left out longer than 1 hour. In the rare case, where children/parents bring food, 75% of meals must meet the USDA Guidelines. Providers may supplement if they choose in order to guarantee 75% compliance. Programs that choose to “offer” rather than “serve” food (i.e. family style serving, school-age multiple choice snacks) carry an additional responsibility to encourage appropriate choices and model good nutritional habits. Combination foods are foods with multiple components that have been packaged together or combined during the cooking process. Combination foods can be counted to meet up to two different components. Scoring consideration of combination foods should be balanced with other items on the menu. Foods that might be served together, but do not meet the definition of combination foods can count for up to 3 components (i.e. hamburgers, sandwiches, cereal and milk with added fruit). When vegetable garnishes are served in sufficient quantities, they may be considered to meet the requirement as a vegetable. Breeding on meat products may not be counted. Cooked dry beans, such as kidney or black beans which are considered to be an excellent source of protein, can count as either a protein or vegetable. However green beans, like string or lima beans which aren’t considered to be good sources of protein, should only be counted as a vegetable. Milk must be served at every meal excluding snack where the provider can chose to serve 2 of the 4 meal components to the children.

### **Indicator 1.3:**

In the case where snack time is flexible and children come and go throughout a period of time, the same sanitary conditions are required (i.e., table sanitized between children using same places, children’s hands washed). If children finger feed themselves during meals or hands become messy, then children should have hands washed after eating also.

See the note on handwashing/use of hand sanitizers that has been added to the “Explanation of Terms Used throughout the Scale”.

An alternative EPA approved “sanitizer” may be used in place of the usual bleach and water solution as part of the table washing procedure or for high chair trays, and other food related surfaces. Check the label of the original container and look for the designation as an EPA sanitizer. Be sure all instructions for use are followed such as the time required to be on the surface or whether to rinse after use. If not do not give credit for cleaning the surface. Safety issues regarding the use of the alternative sanitizer, such as not rinsing the residue if required or not keeping out of the reach of children, should be considered in the supervision-related indicators of this item if applicable, and in the Safety and General supervision items where applicable.

Since three important health practices are required (eating surface washing /sanitizing, hand hygiene before and after eating, and serving uncontaminated foods), consider the extent to which each of the required health practices is followed. If there is little effort in 2 of the 3 health practices, (for example, handwashing is completely ignored, there is no attempt to clean tables, and/or foods are served under conditions that cause extreme contamination), then score 1.3 Yes. There can be minor lapses in following the handwashing procedure (not rubbing for the 20 seconds, but rubbing all hand surfaces thoroughly; not wetting hands first but soap still makes bubbles). However, hands should be cleaned reasonably well. If there is a significant attempt to complete all practices, even if some procedures are not done absolutely correctly, score 3.3, Yes. If there is a minimal attempt to do all procedures, but the practices are completed with many serious errors, score 3.3 No.

**Montana Note**

Eating surfaces, whether inside or out, must be cleaned and sanitized prior to, and following, use for food service. Follow the “2-step” process. Eating surfaces should be: 1) washed with a soap and water mixture to remove gross soil and, 2) sanitized with a bleach-water solution before and after being used for meals/snacks. To allow bleach-water solution to do its job, it should be allowed to sit for at least 10 seconds (preferably longer) before wiping dry or allowing to air dry. For other acceptable sanitizing agents, refer to the general notes. If proper sanitary measures are clearly practiced as part of the child care program, but an occasional lapse does occur, credit can be given. Occasional lapse for children equal to 75% of the time. To score adult hand-washing, the lapse equates to the impact it has or is going to have on the children. In the case where snack time is flexible and children come and go throughout a period of time, the same sanitary conditions are required (i.e., table sanitized between children using same places, children’s hands washed, etc.). If children finger feed themselves during meals, then children should have hands washed after eating. Recontamination of hands is addressed here. To allow staff to keep their focus on children while they are eating, a separate wipe may be used on each child’s hands that have finished eating and may leave the table. When the last child has finished eating, all children should be expected to wash hands (except children without head control). Hands must be washed with soap and running water at least 75% of the time.

With regard to the note on handwashing/use of hand sanitizers that has been added to the “Explanation of Terms Used Throughout the Scale,” stating that hand sanitizer can be used unless hands are “visibly soiled.” Visibly soiled hands result from outdoor/indoor play, contact with bodily fluids, messy play, touching pets, arrival into classroom, or anytime hands are otherwise contaminated. See “Examples of categories when proper handwashing is needed,” on page 124 in All About the ECERS-R. Montana does not support the use of hand sanitizer in place of proper handwashing. See also, The 2011 edition of Caring for Our Children (page 113) “Rationale.” Hand sanitizer has been proven to be effective only after washing properly with soap and water. Hand sanitizer is labeled “keep out of reach of children” due to its high alcohol content and requires careful supervision and child training on proper use in order to be effective. Hand sanitizer is only permitted when running water is unavailable or impractical such as on a picnic or field trip.

Children and adults must wash hands for ten seconds before rinsing. Antibacterial soap cannot be used.

An alternative EPA approved “sanitizer” cannot be used in place of bleach and water solution for the purposes of sanitizing tables, high chairs, or other food related surfaces, unless approval from the local sanitarian has been secured and documentation is on site.

**Indicator 3.1:****Montana Note**

Includes both hunger or thirsty ie. Child requests drink between meals.

Meals/snacks should be served to infants, toddlers, and preschoolers every 2-3 hours unless children are sleeping.

**Indicator 3.2:**

The intent of this indicator is to determine whether the correct components of a meal or snack are being served to the children. No analysis of the nutritional value of foods served is necessary. Use the USDA Meal Guidelines—ages 1–12, in All About the ECERS-R, p. 91, to determine whether the components are present. Personal dietary preferences of the assessor (e.g., preference for whole grain vs. white breads or fresh vs. canned vegetables) are not to be used in determining the quality of the foods served. As long as the required nutritionally adequate meals and snacks are served, within the acceptable timeframe (e.g., program less than or equal to 4 hours=1 meal or snack required; 4–6 hours=1 meal; 6–12 hours=2 meals and 1 snack or 2 snacks and 1 meal; more than 12 hours=2 snacks and 2 meals), credit can be given for 3.2. An occasional instance of not meeting the guidelines—for example, cupcakes for a birthday party instead of the scheduled snack—should not affect the rating. Any supplementary foods served in addition to the required meals/snacks do not have to meet the required components. Check menu for the

week in addition to observing food served. If no menu is available, ask the teacher to describe meals/snacks served for the past week.

### **Montana Note**

The intent of this indicator is to determine whether the correct components of a meal or snack are being served to children. No analysis of the nutritional value of foods is necessary. Use the Food Guide to determine whether the components are present. The guidelines also require ALL components be served together. Personal dietary preferences of the assessor (e.g., whole grain vs. white breads; fresh vs. canned vegetables, high vs. low sugar or fat content, etc.) are not to be used in determining the quality of foods served. Foods that are perishable should not be left out longer than 1 hour. In the rare case, where children/parents bring food, 75% of meals must meet the USDA Guidelines. Providers may supplement if they choose in order to guarantee 75% compliance. Programs that choose to “offer” rather than “serve” food (i.e. family style serving, school-age multiple choice snacks) carry an additional responsibility to encourage appropriate choices and model good nutritional habits. Combination foods are foods with multiple components that have been packaged together or combined during the cooking process. Combination foods can be counted to meet up to two different components. Scoring consideration of combination foods should be balanced with other items on the menu. Foods that might be served together, but do not meet the definition of combination foods can count for up to 3 components (i.e. hamburgers, sandwiches, cereal and milk with added fruit). When vegetable garnishes are served in sufficient quantities, they may be considered to meet the requirement as a vegetable. Breeding on meat products may not be counted. Cooked dry beans, such as kidney or black beans which are considered to be an excellent source of protein, can count as either a protein or vegetable. However green beans, like string or lima beans which aren’t considered to be good sources of protein, should only be counted as a vegetable. Milk must be served at every meal excluding snack where the provider can choose to serve 2 of the 4 meal components to the children.

With regard to drinking water being offered between meals/snacks to children consuming solid foods, score “No” if during the observation water is not offered to at least some of the children who cannot access their own water. Also score „No” if water is not available to children who can ask for it or get their own.

### **Indicator 3.3:**

If sanitary conditions are usually maintained and if handwashing and other sanitary procedures are clearly a part of the program, credit can be given for 3.3 even if there is an occasional lapse in practice.

See the note on handwashing/use of hand sanitizers that has been added to the “Explanation of Terms Used throughout the Scale”.

An alternative EPA approved “sanitizer” may be used in place of the usual bleach and water solution as part of the table washing procedure or for high chair trays, and other food related surfaces. Check the label of the original container and look for the designation as an EPA sanitizer. Be sure all instructions for use are followed such as the time required to be on the surface or whether to rinse after use. If not do not give credit for cleaning the surface. Safety issues regarding the use of the alternative sanitizer, such as not rinsing the residue if required or not keeping out of the reach of children, should be considered in the supervision-related indicators of this item if applicable, and in the Safety and General supervision items where applicable.

Since three important health practices are required (eating surface washing /sanitizing, hand hygiene before and after eating, and serving uncontaminated foods), consider the extent to which each of the required health practices is followed. If there is little effort in 2 of the 3 health practices, (for example, handwashing is completely ignored, there is no attempt to clean tables, and/or foods are served under conditions that cause extreme contamination), then score 1.3 Yes. There can be minor lapses in following the handwashing procedure (not rubbing for the 20 seconds, but rubbing all hand surfaces thoroughly; not wetting hands first but soap still makes bubbles). However, hands should be cleaned reasonably well. If there is a significant attempt to complete all practices, even if some procedures are not done absolutely

correctly, score 3.3, Yes. If there is a minimal attempt to do all procedures, but the practices are completed with many serious errors, score 3.3 No.

### **Montana Note**

Eating surfaces, whether inside or out, must be cleaned and sanitized prior to, and following, use for food service. Follow the “2-step” process. Eating surfaces should be: 1) washed with a soap and water mixture to remove gross soil and, 2) sanitized with a bleach-water solution before and after being used for meals/snacks. To allow bleach-water solution to do its job, it should be allowed to sit for at least 10 seconds (preferably longer) before wiping dry or allowing to air dry. For other acceptable sanitizing agents, refer to the general notes. If proper sanitary measures are clearly practiced as part of the child care program, but an occasional lapse does occur, credit can be given. Occasional lapse for children equal to 75% of the time. To score adult hand-washing, the lapse equates to the impact it has or is going to have on the children. In the case where snack time is flexible and children come and go throughout a period of time, the same sanitary conditions are required (i.e., table sanitized between children using same places, children’s hands washed, etc.). If children finger feed themselves during meals, then children should have hands washed after eating. Recontamination of hands is addressed here. To allow staff to keep their focus on children while they are eating, a separate wipe may be used on each child’s hands that have finished eating and may leave the table. When the last child has finished eating, all children should be expected to wash hands (except children without head control). Hands must be washed with soap and running water at least 75% of the time.

An alternative EPA approved “sanitizer” cannot be used in place of bleach and water solution for the purposes of sanitizing tables, high chairs, or other food related surfaces, unless approval from the local sanitarian has been secured and documentation is on site.

With regard to the note on handwashing/use of hand sanitizers that has been added to the “Explanation of Terms Used Throughout the Scale,” stating that hand sanitizer can be used unless hands are “visibly soiled.” Visibly soiled hands result from outdoor/indoor play, contact with bodily fluids, messy play, touching pets, arrival into classroom, or anytime hands are otherwise contaminated. See “Examples of categories when proper handwashing is needed,” on page 124 in All About the ECERS-R. Montana does not support the use of hand sanitizer in place of proper handwashing. See also, The 2011 edition of Caring for Our Children (page 113) “Rationale.” Hand sanitizer has been proven to be effective only after washing properly with soap and water. Hand sanitizer is labeled “keep out of reach of children” due to its high alcohol content and requires careful supervision and child training on proper use in order to be effective. Hand sanitizer is only permitted when running water is unavailable or impractical such as on a picnic or field trip.

Children and adults must wash hands for ten seconds before rinsing. Antibacterial soap cannot be used.

If the same sink is used by either children or adults for both diapering/toileting and food-related routines (including toothbrushing) or for other purposes (to wash toys/other classroom equipment; after wiping nose), it must be sanitized by spraying sink and faucets with a bleach solution after diapering/toileting use.

### **Indicator 3.5:**

A food/beverage substitution made in case of allergies or family dietary restrictions must meet the primary meal/snack nutrient contribution of the food/beverage it replaces. For example, in the case of milk, the substitute beverage needs to be equal in calcium and protein. Therefore, water, juice, or calcium-enriched juice is not a milk substitute since it does not replace the protein, but a vegetarian milk, such as soy milk, is. To get additional information in order to decide whether substitutes can be credited, ask staff, “How are substitutes made for foods/beverages children cannot eat?”

### **Montana Note**

Credit can be received when information on children’s allergies and chronic medical conditions are posted in a confidential manner. In programs where the children spend significant amount of time in more than

4/01/2015

one classroom, the allergy information should be posted in the classroom in which they spend the majority (over 50%) of their time. However, it is required that any information on a child's food allergies or medical conditions that effect the child's eating habits must be posted in the classroom where the child eats.

**Indicator 5.1:**

"Most" requires that it is more likely for staff to be sitting with the children during meals and group snacks than not. Although staff may need to leave the table to assist with the meal, most of the time should be spent sitting with the children. It is not required that each table have a staff member. Some staff may help with serving, while others sit with children.

**Indicator: 5.1**  
**Montana Note**

Staff and children are required to eat together family style during most meals. Staff and children must participate in the same meal. Some foods must be dished up so that children can serve themselves. Staff must sit at the table and eat with the children to help facilitate conversations, help with the meal service, and supervise children while eating. There must be at least one staff person at each table or an attempt made by staff to include all children in the conversations, make sure they are served and receive foods, and are closely supervised.

**11. Nap**

**Item 11:**

Score NA on this item for programs of 4 hours or less that do not provide a nap or rest. For longer programs, nap/rest should be based on the age and individual needs of the children.

**Indicator 1.1:**

"Inappropriate" schedule means that nap/rest is either too late or too early (e.g., children are tired long before naptime or are not ready to sleep), or children are left napping or required to be on their cots too long (more than 2½ hours), which might interfere with family bedtime routines.

**Indicator 1.2:**

Caring for Our Children, 3rd Edition, now requires 3 feet between cots/mats. Solid screens or other barriers, such as crib ends or toy shelves, are not acceptable because they would need to extend from floor to ceiling to prevent air borne contamination from one child to another, and would disrupt supervision. For 1.2, score No if at least 75% of the mats/cots are separated by at least 18 inches. For 3.2, do not give credit unless there is at least 18 inches between every sleeping provision. 5.3 requires 3 feet between each sleeping surface with no exceptions (e.g., shelves or screens as dividers).

**Montana Note**

Credit for this indicator can't be given if the bedding is stored in such a way that it touches bedding which belongs to other children.

**Indicator 3.2:**

"Not crowded" means the cots/mats are at least 18 inches apart, unless separated by a solid barrier. Children's bedding must be stored separately, so that personal items are not touching one another, mats/cots must be covered with material that makes them easy to wash and sanitize.

Caring for Our Children, 3rd Edition, now requires 3 feet between cots/mats. Solid screens or other barriers, such as crib ends or toy shelves, are not acceptable because they would need to extend from floor to ceiling to prevent air borne contamination from one child to another, and would disrupt supervision. For 1.2, score No if at least 75% of the mats/cots are separated by at least 18 inches. For

3.2, do not give credit unless there is at least 18 inches between every sleeping provision. 5.3 requires 3 feet between each sleeping surface with no exceptions (e.g., shelves or screens as dividers).

#### **Montana Note**

Credit for this indicator can't be given if the bedding is stored in such a way that it touches bedding which belongs to other children.

Two coverings are required for children over 12 months of age - One to cover the type of bedding used and one for the child to have access to in order to cover up with. Bedding should be washed weekly. With the exception of cots, sleeping provisions should be 2 inches thick.

#### **Indicator 3.3:**

"Sufficient supervision" means enough staff are present to protect children's safety in case of emergency and handle children who wake up or need help. At least one alert staff member is always in the room.

#### **Indicator 5.3**

Caring for Our Children, 3rd Edition, now requires 3 feet between cots/mats. Solid screens or other barriers, such as crib ends or toy shelves, are not acceptable because they would need to extend from floor to ceiling to prevent air borne contamination from one child to another, and would disrupt supervision. For 1.2, score No if at least 75% of the mats/cots are separated by at least 18 inches. For 3.2, do not give credit unless there is at least 18 inches between every sleeping provision. 5.3 requires 3 feet between each sleeping surface with no exceptions (e.g., shelves or screens as dividers).

#### **Indicator 7.2:**

Credit can be given when children can be happily occupied by reading a book or playing quietly while on their cots.

## **12. Toileting/ diapering**

#### **Item 12:**

For information on changing children in "Pull-ups" or other disposable underwear, or with soiled clothing, see the 2011 edition of Caring for Our Children, pages 108-109.

In the most recent Caring for Our Children, 3rd edition, pages 106-108, there are changes to the diapering procedure to use when scoring. First, non-absorbent paper is required that extends from the child's shoulders to beyond the feet. The diapering surface must be disinfected, but does not have to be washed first, as long as the paper is used and the surface is not visibly soiled. If paper is not used, then the surface must be cleaned (a wipe is permitted for this) and then disinfected, whether visibly soiled or not to be counted as correct when scoring. Second, a soiled diaper should be left under the child, while the child is cleaned. Then it should be folded over and disposed of properly. For the complete current diapering procedure, see Caring for Our Children, or look for the new handout on [www.ersi.info](http://www.ersi.info).

#### **Montana Note**

For proper sanitary diaper change procedure, refer to the Montana Diaper Change Procedure. For the purpose of the scales pull-ups are held to the same standards as diapers.

#### **Indicator 1.1:**

If the same sink is used by either children or adults for both diapering/toileting and food-related routines (including toothbrushing) or for other purposes (to wash toys/other classroom equipment; after wiping nose), it must be sanitized by spraying sink and faucets with a bleach solution after diapering/toileting use. As an exception to this rule, in order to avoid requiring children to wash hands in quick succession between toileting and being fed, the following applies: if children use toilet, wash hands and then immediately sit down for meal/snack, contamination of children's hands at toileting sink must be minimized by having children/adults turn off faucet with paper towel. Score 1.1 "No" if no major problems



are observed, or only two or three minor problems. (For additional information on sanitation including proper diaper changing procedures, see All About the ECERS-R, pp. 111–114.)

An alternative EPA approved “disinfectant” (not sanitizer) may be used in place of the usual bleach and water solution. Check the label of the original container and look for the designation as an EPA disinfectant. Be sure all instructions for use are followed. If not do not give credit for sanitizing the surface. Safety issues regarding the use of the alternative disinfectant, such as not rinsing the residue if required or not keeping out of the reach of children, should be considered in the supervision-related indicators of this item if applicable, and in the Safety and General supervision items where applicable.

#### **Montana Note**

When a diapering table is not used, an alternative diapering surface is considered adequate if the surface is nonporous, and can be cleaned and sanitized. In addition the surface must be long and wide enough to accommodate the child’s whole body from head to foot. The diapering surface must minimize the chance for contamination of surrounding surfaces. Such a diapering surface is acceptable only if diapering can be completed without contamination of surrounding areas. When children are changed standing up while wearing a pull-up or diaper the same rules apply.

An alternative EPA approved “sanitizer” cannot be used in place of bleach and water solution for the purposes of sanitizing tables, high chairs, or other food related surfaces, unless approval from the local sanitarian has been secured and documentation is on site.

#### **Indicator 1.2:**

In case special procedures are required such as diapering for an older child or catheterization, they must be handled in a sanitary manner that preserves the child’s dignity.

#### **Indicator 1.3:**

Assume that the handwashing seen during the observation is typical of what happens throughout the day. Base your ratings for 1.3 and 3.3 on what you see. Adults’ hands must be washed even if gloves are used.

See the note on handwashing/use of hand sanitizers that has been added to the “Explanation of Terms Used throughout the Scale”.

#### **Montana Note**

Since new research has shown that waterless washes are an inadequate sanitary measure, proper hand washing with soap and running water is required following diapering or toileting.

With regard to the note on handwashing/use of hand sanitizers that has been added to the “Explanation of Terms Used Throughout the Scale,” stating that hand sanitizer can be used unless hands are “visibly soiled.” Visibly soiled hands result from outdoor/indoor play, contact with bodily fluids, messy play, touching pets, arrival into classroom, or anytime hands are otherwise contaminated. See “Examples of categories when proper handwashing is needed,” on page 124 in All About the ECERS-R. Montana does not support the use of hand sanitizer in place of proper handwashing. See also, The 2011 edition of Caring for Our Children (page 113) “Rationale.” Hand sanitizer has been proven to be effective only after washing properly with soap and water. Hand sanitizer is labeled “keep out of reach of children” due to its high alcohol content and requires careful supervision and child training on proper use in order to be effective. Hand sanitizer is only permitted when running water is unavailable or impractical such as on a picnic or field trip.

Children and adults must wash hands for ten seconds before rinsing. Antibacterial soap cannot be used.

#### **Indicator 1.4:**

“Inadequate” supervision means that staff do not monitor to protect the safety of the children or to ensure that sanitary procedures (e.g., handwashing) are carried out.

**Indicator 3.1:**

If the same sink is used by either children or adults for both diapering/toileting and food-related routines (including toothbrushing) or for other purposes (to wash toys/other classroom equipment; after wiping nose), it must be sanitized by spraying sink and faucets with a bleach solution after diapering/toileting use. As an exception to this rule, in order to avoid requiring children to wash hands in quick succession between toileting and being fed, the following applies: if children use toilet, wash hands and then immediately sit down for meal/snack, contamination of children's hands at toileting sink must be minimized by having children/adults turn off faucet with paper towel. Score 1.1 "No" if no major problems are observed, or only two or three minor problems. (For additional information on sanitation including proper diaper changing procedures, see All About the ECERS-R, pp. 111–114.)

Score "Yes" when no major problem is observed or only one minor problem is observed.

An alternative EPA approved "disinfectant" (not sanitizer) may be used in place of the usual bleach and water solution. Check the label of the original container and look for the designation as an EPA disinfectant. Be sure all instructions for use are followed. If not do not give credit for sanitizing the surface. Safety issues regarding the use of the alternative disinfectant, such as not rinsing the residue if required or not keeping out of the reach of children, should be considered in the supervision-related indicators of this item if applicable, and in the Safety and General supervision items where applicable.

**Montana Note**

When a diapering table is not used, an alternative diapering surface is considered adequate if the surface is nonporous, and can be cleaned and sanitized. In addition the surface must be long and wide enough to accommodate the child's whole body from head to foot. The diapering surface must minimize the chance for contamination of surrounding surfaces. Such a diapering surface is acceptable only if diapering can be completed without contamination of surrounding areas. When children are changed standing up while wearing a pull-up or diaper the same rules apply.

An alternative EPA approved "sanitizer" cannot be used in place of bleach and water solution for the purposes of sanitizing tables, high chairs, or other food related surfaces, unless approval from the local sanitarian has been secured and documentation is on site.

If the same sink is used by either children or adults for both diapering/toileting and food-related routines (including toothbrushing) or for other purposes (to wash toys/other classroom equipment; after wiping nose), it must be sanitized by spraying sink and faucets with a bleach solution after diapering/toileting use.

**Indicator 3.3:**

Assume that the handwashing seen during the observation is typical of what happens throughout the day. Base your ratings for 1.3 and 3.3 on what you see. Adults' hands must be washed even if gloves are used.

A score of "Yes" requires that 75% of children's hands are washed and 75% of adults hands are washed.

See the note on handwashing/use of hand sanitizers that has been added to the "Explanation of Terms Used throughout the Scale".

**Montana Note**

Since new research has shown that waterless washes are an inadequate sanitary measure, proper hand washing with soap and running water is required following diapering or toileting.

With regard to the note on handwashing/use of hand sanitizers that has been added to the "Explanation of Terms Used Throughout the Scale," stating that hand sanitizer can be used unless hands are "visibly

soiled.” Visibly soiled hands result from outdoor/indoor play, contact with bodily fluids, messy play, touching pets, arrival into classroom, or anytime hands are otherwise contaminated. See “Examples of categories when proper handwashing is needed,” on page 124 in All About the ECERS-R. Montana does not support the use of hand sanitizer in place of proper handwashing. See also, The 2011 edition of Caring for Our Children (page 113) “Rationale.” Hand sanitizer has been proven to be effective only after washing properly with soap and water. Hand sanitizer is labeled “keep out of reach of children” due to its high alcohol content and requires careful supervision and child training on proper use in order to be effective. Hand sanitizer is only permitted when running water is unavailable or impractical such as on a picnic or field trip.

Children and adults must wash hands for ten seconds before rinsing. Antibacterial soap cannot be used.

**Indicator 3.4:**

**Montana Note**

Diapers/Pull-ups should be visually checked approximately every 2 hours.

**Indicator 3.5:**

“Adequate” supervision means that teachers check to be sure that sanitary toilet conditions are maintained (e.g., toilets flushed, toilet paper/towels and soap provided) and ensure that children complete toileting procedures properly (e.g., wipe properly, wash hands, avoid inappropriate behaviors).

**Indicator 5.1:**

Since potty chairs are a health hazard, they should be avoided for general use. In the rare case when special need requires the use of a potty, credit toward a score of 5 may be given if the potty is used only for the child with a special need and is washed and disinfected after each use.

**Montana Note:**

Caregivers must have spare clothing for children to use. Sunscreen and sun protection should be provided as needed regardless of time of day. Care should be taken to wash children’s faces and wipe their noses.

**Indicator 7.1:**

Child-sized sinks and toilets are fixtures that are considerably smaller or lower than regular-sized fixtures, and can be used comfortably by children without modifications such as toilet seats and steps. To give credit for 7.1, toilets and sinks must be usable with no adaptations (e.g., steps), by at least 75% of children in group.

### **13. Health Practices**

**Item 13:**

This item excludes the sanitation procedures rated in Item 10. Meals/snacks, Item 11. Nap/rest, and Item 12. Toileting/diapering.

**Montana Note**

For proper Hand-washing procedure, refer to the MT Hand-washing Process.

**Indicator 1.1:**

Areas where blood and other bodily fluid spills have occurred must be cleaned and disinfected. Gloves should be worn when handling blood.

See the note on handwashing/use of hand sanitizers that has been added to the “Explanation of Terms Used throughout the Scale”.

**Montana Note**

With regard to the note on handwashing/use of hand sanitizers that has been added to the “Explanation of Terms Used Throughout the Scale,” stating that hand sanitizer can be used unless hands are “visibly soiled.” Visibly soiled hands result from outdoor/indoor play, contact with bodily fluids, messy play, touching pets, arrival into classroom, or anytime hands are otherwise contaminated. See “Examples of categories when proper handwashing is needed,” on page 124 in All About the ECERS-R. Montana does not support the use of hand sanitizer in place of proper handwashing. See also, The 2011 edition of Caring for Our Children (page 113) “Rationale.” Hand sanitizer has been proven to be effective only after washing properly with soap and water. Hand sanitizer is labeled “keep out of reach of children” due to its high alcohol content and requires careful supervision and child training on proper use in order to be effective. Hand sanitizer is only permitted when running water is unavailable or impractical such as on a picnic or field trip.

Children and adults must wash hands for ten seconds before rinsing. Antibacterial soap cannot be used.

**Indicator 3.1:**

“Adequate handwashing” means that hands are washed thoroughly with soap and running water, and dried with a towel that is not shared, or hands are air dried with a blower. Since handwashing at mealtimes and after toileting is rated in other items, rate here based on all other handwashing required. Give credit for 3.1 only if you observe that hands are washed 75% of times when needed. Wipes may be used when necessary, such as after wiping noses on the playground, but this is not counted as handwashing.

There are four categories of handwashing that must be tracked to score this indicator: (1) Upon arrival into classroom, and re-entering classroom after being outside, (2) Before and after water play or after messy play, (3) After dealing with bodily fluids, and (4) After touching contaminated objects and surfaces, such as trash can lids and pets. To score, observers should be aware of times that handwashing is carried out when needed. This means that the observer should watch (and listen). For example, observers should listen for coughing or sneezing by the children and staff, or watch for noses that need wiping to see that proper handwashing is carried out. Counts should be kept on the Score Sheet to indicate when handwashing has been carried out properly as needed, and when it has been ignored. (For sample handwashing tracking system see All About the ECERS-R, p. 125.)

The 75% of required handwashing must be calculated separately for staff and children, but the percentage should be based on the total handwashing in all categories. If either group washes hands less than 75% of the time when needed, score 3.1 “No.”

See the note on handwashing/use of hand sanitizers that has been added to the “Explanation of Terms Used throughout the Scale”.

**Montana Note**

While combining all categories to determine 75%, priority should be given to hand-washing when dealing with bodily fluids (blood and mucous).

With regard to the note on handwashing/use of hand sanitizers that has been added to the “Explanation of Terms Used Throughout the Scale,” stating that hand sanitizer can be used unless hands are “visibly soiled.” Visibly soiled hands result from outdoor/indoor play, contact with bodily fluids, messy play, touching pets, arrival into classroom, or anytime hands are otherwise contaminated. See “Examples of categories when proper handwashing is needed,” on page 124 in All About the ECERS-R. Montana does not support the use of hand sanitizer in place of proper handwashing. See also, The 2011 edition of Caring for Our Children (page 113) “Rationale.” Hand sanitizer has been proven to be effective only after washing properly with soap and water. Hand sanitizer is labeled “keep out of reach of children” due to its high alcohol content and requires careful supervision and child training on proper use in order to be effective. Hand sanitizer is only permitted when running water is unavailable or impractical such as on a picnic or field trip.

Children and adults must wash hands for ten seconds before rinsing. Antibacterial soap cannot be used.

**Indicator 3.2:**

Examples for this indicator include: tissues available and used when necessary; same washcloth/towel not used for more than one child; soap available and used; toothbrushes stored to avoid contamination. "Usually take action" means 75% of the time. However, if there are any major problems, such as bodily fluid spills not cleaned up promptly or signs of animal contamination in children's play spaces, score 3.2 "No."

See the note on handwashing/use of hand sanitizers that has been added to the "Explanation of Terms Used throughout the Scale".

**Montana Note**

Play materials that come into contact with bodily fluids must be cleaned and sanitized after each child's use. Toys that do not come into contact with bodily fluids should be weekly or when visibly soiled. (page 106 Caring for Our Children.)

**Indicator 3.4:**

If a substantial number of these procedures are used to minimize spread of contagious diseases, give credit for this indicator. Not all examples in the indicator are required to score "Yes."

**Indicator 5.2:**

**Montana Note**

Consider all aspects of how a provider models any issues of health practices that are observed. Do not base score on only one aspect of being a good health model. Consider, for example, whether the provider eats healthful foods, practices good hygiene habits in front of the children, wears appropriate clothing for the weather, washes hands when needed.

**Indicator 7.2:**

Score NA for programs open 6 hours or less per day. If the "same sink" is used for both tooth brushing and toileting, without sanitizing, consider this under Item 12. Toileting/diapering.

**Montana Note**

Toothbrushes need to be labeled with child's name and stored in toothbrush storage device with bristles not touching and not touching any contaminated surface. Devices should be washed and sanitized or replaced when they become visibly dirty.

## **14. Safety Practices**

**Item 14:**

**Montana Note**

For a more detailed listing of Playground Safety Hazards, refer to the Montana Playground Safety Sheet.

If sand/water play practices are observed that puts the children's safety at risk discount where applicable.

**Indicator 1.1:**

The following list of major hazards is not meant to be complete. Be sure to note all safety problems on score sheet.

Some indoor safety problems:

- No safety caps on electrical sockets
- Loose electrical cords
- Heavy objects or furniture child can pull down

- Medicines, cleaning materials, and other substances labeled “keep out of reach of children” not locked away
- Pot handles on stove accessible
- Stove controls accessible
- Water temperature too hot
- Mats or rugs that slide
- Unprotected hot stove or fireplace in use
- Open stairwells accessible
- Play areas in front of doors

Some outdoor safety problems:

- Tools not meant for children’s use are accessible
- Any substance labeled “keep out of reach of children” not locked away
- Sharp or dangerous objects present
- Unsafe walkways or stairs
- Easy access to road
- Hazardous trash accessible
- Play equipment too high, not well maintained, unanchored
- Play equipment poses threat of entrapment, injury from pinchpoints or projections

Score “Yes” when the observer can list two or more very serious hazards in indoor spaces used by the children or more than five minor hazards (such as loose carpet edge, splinters on a shelf, or bleach-water solution stored within children’s reach). Bleach and water solution, used to sanitize surfaces, does not have to be locked away, but must be stored out of reach of young children. It should not be sprayed where it can be breathed in by children, for example, while children are seated around the table. Any electrical outlets or wires present where children are allowed to play must be safe (e.g., outlets covered, cords secure). When special safety outlets are used in a program, ask the teacher or director how they are operated to ensure child safety, and check to be sure operation rules are followed correctly. Flip covers on outdoor outlets are acceptable as safety caps as long as they are kept closed when not in use.

### **Montana Note**

When there are more than 3 minor hazards or if there is 1 serious hazard outdoors, or indoors than credit cannot not be given at the one level. If there are no serious hazards and no more than 3 minor hazards credit can be given in the three level. Lack of resilient surfacing, equipment spacing, etc. may be considered as major hazards depending on the measurements and whether or not serious injury could result.

Indoor space for gross motor play and equipment is not held to the same standards as outside; however, safety as the primary focus should be insured. Consider the placement of equipment as well as the surface under equipment where children might fall. If indoor children’s climbing equipment is used, mats or carpet are required to be placed under the equipment if it is over 12 inches in height. This is in reference to equipment specifically for climbing.

The water used by the children should be checked. The temperature should be considered even if the children can’t turn the water on themselves as a distracted adult could turn the wrong faucet on.

Spraying bleach water, or other chemicals over the children’s heads, such as sanitizing table, is a safety hazard.

### **Indicator 1.2:**

The following list of major hazards is not meant to be complete. Be sure to note all safety problems on score sheet.

Some indoor safety problems:

- No safety caps on electrical sockets

- Loose electrical cords
- Heavy objects or furniture child can pull down
- Medicines, cleaning materials, and other substances labeled “keep out of reach of children” not locked away
- Pot handles on stove accessible
- Stove controls accessible
- Water temperature too hot
- Mats or rugs that slide
- Unprotected hot stove or fireplace in use
- Open stairwells accessible
- Play areas in front of doors

Some outdoor safety problems:

- Tools not meant for children’s use are accessible
- Any substance labeled “keep out of reach of children” not locked away
- Sharp or dangerous objects present
- Unsafe walkways or stairs
- Easy access to road
- Hazardous trash accessible
- Play equipment too high, not well maintained, unanchored
- Play equipment poses threat of entrapment, injury from pinchpoints or projections

Score “Yes” when the observer can list two or more very serious hazards seen in the outdoor spaces used by children or six or more minor hazards (such as tree roots that are unlikely to cause tripping, shallow puddles, or sand on a sidewalk).

### **Montana Note**

When there are more than 3 minor hazards or if there is 1 serious hazard outdoors, or indoors than credit cannot not be given at the one level. If there are no serious hazards and no more than 3 minor hazards credit can be given in the three level. Lack of resilient surfacing, equipment spacing, etc. may be considered as major hazards depending on the measurements and whether or not serious injury could result.

### **Indicator 1.3:**

If this indicator is scored “Yes,” then it is likely that Items 29 and 30 (supervision items) may also receive scores of 1. Note that to score this indicator “Yes,” supervision must be inadequate both indoors and outdoors.

### **Indicator 3.1:**

The following list of major hazards is not meant to be complete. Be sure to note all safety problems on score sheet.

Some indoor safety problems:

- No safety caps on electrical sockets
- Loose electrical cords
- Heavy objects or furniture child can pull down
- Medicines, cleaning materials, and other substances labeled “keep out of reach of children” not locked away
- Pot handles on stove accessible
- Stove controls accessible
- Water temperature too hot
- Mats or rugs that slide
- Unprotected hot stove or fireplace in use
- Open stairwells accessible
- Play areas in front of doors

Some outdoor safety problems:

- Tools not meant for children's use are accessible
- Any substance labeled "keep out of reach of children" not locked away
- Sharp or dangerous objects present
- Unsafe walkways or stairs
- Easy access to road
- Hazardous trash accessible
- Play equipment too high, not well maintained, unanchored
- Play equipment poses threat of entrapment, injury from pinchpoints or projections

To give credit, there must be no more than five minor hazards observed.

### **Montana Note**

When there are more than 3 minor hazards or if there is 1 serious hazard outdoors, or indoors than credit cannot not be given at the one level. If there are no serious hazards and no more than 3 minor hazards credit can be given in the three level. Lack of resilient surfacing, equipment spacing, etc. may be considered as major hazards depending on the measurements and whether or not serious injury could result.

Indoor space for gross motor play and equipment is not held to the same standards as outside; however, safety as the primary focus should be insured. Consider the placement of equipment as well as the surface under equipment where children might fall. If indoor children's climbing equipment is used, mats or carpet are required to be placed under the equipment if it is over 12 inches in height. This is in reference to equipment specifically for climbing.

The water used by the children should be checked. The temperature should be considered even if the children can't turn the water on themselves as a distracted adult could turn the wrong faucet on.

Spraying bleach water, or other chemicals over the children's heads, such as sanitizing table, is a safety hazard.

### **Indicator 5.2:**

To give credit, staff must be observed discussing or explaining safety rules.

## **15. Books and Pictures**

### **Indicator 1.1:**

Score "Yes" if fewer than five intact books are accessible to the children or if the accessible books can be used for less than 1 hour in a full-day program of 8 hours or more, appropriately prorated for shorter programs (see the chart in the "Explanation of Terms Used Throughout the Scale" on p. 7).

### **Montana Note**

To give credit for the books being accessible, the numbers of books required in these indicators must be met.

### **Indicator 1.2:**

Score "Yes" if children are not read to at least once a day, except under unusual circumstances.

### **Indicator 3.1:**

"Some books accessible" means that at least one book for half of the children allowed to attend at any time (e.g., 10 books for a group of 20). To give credit, books must be accessible for at least 1 hour per day in a program of 8 hours or more, appropriately prorated for shorter programs (see chart in "Explanation of Terms Used Throughout the Scale" on p. 7).



**Montana Note**

To give credit for the books being accessible, the numbers of books required in these indicators must be met.

**Indicator 3.2:**

Reading may be done in small groups or in larger groups depending on the ability of the children to attend to the story.

**Indicator 5.1:**

All accessible books do not have to be found in the book area. Be sure to look for them in other areas of the room. A “wide selection of books” includes a variety of topics: fantasy; factual information; stories about people, animals, and nature/science; books that reflect different cultures and abilities. In order to be given credit for a wide selection there must be at least 20 books for a group of up to 15 children, and at least one extra book for each additional child over that number permitted to attend. Approximately 3–4 examples of each topic are required, but this rule is flexible, and there might be more or less of any topic. However, each topic must be represented. (See All About the ECERS-R, pp. 149–152, for further information.)

**Montana Note**

To give credit for the books being accessible, the numbers of books required in these indicators must be met.

**Indicator 5.2:**

Examples of additional language materials are posters and pictures, flannel board stories, picture card games, and recorded stories and songs. To give credit, the materials must be accessible at least 1 hour daily in a full-day program of 8 hours or more, appropriately prorated for shorter programs (see chart in “Explanation of Terms Used Throughout the Scale” on p. 7).

**Montana Note**

Some is defined, as being used daily and that there are at least two materials in addition to books accessible daily.

**Indicator 5.3:****Montana Note**

Since young children cannot read, the book area should be designed for children to view books by seeing the fronts of the books. If only the spines are showing credit cannot be given. To give credit for this indicator, you must observe that 75% of the required number of books are organized with the fronts of the books visible.

**Indicator 5.4:**

Examples of “appropriate” materials and activities include simpler books read with younger children; large print materials for child with visual impairment; books in children’s primary language(s); rhyming games for older children. If there are any books accessible to children that show violence in a graphic or frightening way, or that glorify violence, then credit cannot be given for this indicator. Check only books and pictures that are accessible to the children. It is not necessary to check materials that are not obviously meant as books/pictures for children such as stacks of magazines for use in art or materials not meant for use with children that are stored in a teacher’s space.

**Montana Note**

Books and other language materials that contain graphic violence or frightening content are not considered appropriate for any preschool-kindergarten children. Discount if 25% or more of books accessible to children show violence that is graphic.

**Indicator 5.5:**

Informal reading must be observed at least once to give credit for this indicator. (For examples of informal reading see All About the ECERS-R, pp. 154–155.)

**Montana Note**

Informal reading is defined as a caregiver reading to 1, 2 or a small group of children outside of a structured, organized reading time. Informal reading must be observed at least once to get credit for this indicator.

**Indicator 7.2:**

Score “Yes” if three or more books relate to a theme studied during the past month. If themes are never changed, credit cannot be given.

**16. Encouraging children to communicate****Item 16:**

Children of different ages and abilities or those speaking a primary language different from the primary language of the classroom require different methods to encourage communication. Suitable activities must be included for children speaking a different primary language or those requiring alternative communication methods, such as signing or the use of augmentative communication devices.

**Indicator 1.2:**

Materials to encourage expressive language include play telephones, puppets, flannel board stories, dolls and dramatic play props, small figures and animals; communication boards and other assistive devices for children with disabilities. Score “Yes” if almost no materials are accessible for children to use, or accessibility of the materials is limited to a very short time period of the day, so that children rarely have a chance to use materials.

**Indicator 3.1:**

Activities used by staff to encourage children to communicate require that staff take action to draw communication from a child. During free play, for example, the teacher might ask the child to talk about what he or she is doing or making. During circle time, finger plays, songs, reciting nursery rhymes, or helping to tell a story would count toward meeting this indicator.

**Montana Note**

Four instances must be observed during the observation during group time and free play.

**Indicator 3.2:**

To give credit, the materials must be accessible for at least 1 hour per day in a program of 8 hours or more. For programs operating less than 8 hours, see chart in “Explanation of Terms Used Throughout the Scale” on p. 7 to determine the required amount of time.

**Montana Note**

There should be enough materials to encourage communication without competition and conflict due to scarcity.

**Indicator 3.3:**

Songs, poems, and/or chants, with violent, sexually explicit, or culturally biased content are considered inappropriate. Score this indicator, “No” if such material is observed in use.

**Montana Note**

To score “Yes” there can be no child obviously ignored with little or no talking from the provider at all. Some children may receive less verbal interaction, but all must get some.

**Indicator 5.1:****Montana Note**

If no free play time is observed, score this indicator "No."

**Indicator 5.2:****Montana Note**

Required materials should be accessible for a substantial portion of the day.

**Indicator 7.2:**

Do not give credit for picture word labels on shelves or labels posted on other objects in the room. Also, if staff only write children's names on their work, no credit is given for this indicator, even if staff read names back to the children. (For examples of linking speaking to print, see All About the ECERS-R, pp. 165–167.)

**Montana Note**

In order to give credit for this indicator, some evidence must be observed. Consider the ages and abilities of the children.

**17. Using language to develop reasoning****Indicator 1.2:**

Concepts include same/different, matching, classifying, sequencing, one-to-one correspondence, spatial relationships, cause and effect.

**Indicator 3.1:**

"Staff sometimes talk about logical relationships" means that during the observation staff are observed making comments that relate to logical concepts at least twice.

**Indicator 3.2:**

If at least two instances are observed during the observation, score "Yes".

**Indicator 5.1:**

At least one instance must be observed.

**Indicator 5.2:**

At least two instances must be observed.

**Indicator 7.1:**

To give credit, at least two examples must be observed that are not related to children's use of play materials that encourage reasoning.

**Indicator 7.2:**

At least two instances must be observed.

**18. Informal use of language****Item 18:**

When multiple staff are working with the children, base the score for this item on the overall impact of the staff's communication with the children. The intent of this item is that children's need for language stimulation is met.

**Indicator 1.1:****Montana Note**

To score "Yes" there can be no child obviously ignored with little or no talking from the provider at all. Some children may receive less verbal interaction, but all must get some.

**Indicator 3.1:**

In order to be given credit for "conversation," there should be some mutual listening and talking/responding from both the staff and child. This is different from one-way communication such as giving directions or commands. For children with less verbal ability, the response may not be in words but may involve gestures, sign language, or communication devices.

**Montana Note**

At least two examples of conversation must be observed during the observation.

To score "Yes" there can be no child obviously ignored with little or no talking from the provider at all. Some children may receive less verbal interaction, but all must get some.

**Indicator 5.2:**

In order to decide on a score for this indicator, consider the amount of language staff use to manage routines and control behavior in relationship to the amount of language used to exchange information and interact socially. If a far greater amount is used for information exchange and social discussion (about 75%) than for control and management, score "Yes."

**Indicator 5.3:**

"Expand" means staff respond verbally to add more information to what a child says. For example, a child says, "Look at this truck," and the teacher responds, "It's a red dump truck. See, it has a place to carry things." Observe to see if staff use many words in response to children's interests. When a child with restricted verbal ability points to something, if staff only name the object, do not give credit. Give credit, if in addition to the name, staff add more information, (e.g., color and other properties of object, use, etc.). Credit can be given if the staff initiates the topic and then adds to what the child says in response to the question. At least two instances of expansion must be observed during the observation.

**Indicator 7.1:**

To give credit for these indicators, several instances must be observed.

**Montana Note**

This indicator requires that several instances, at least three or four, be observed throughout the observation as a sample of the ongoing behavior that staff exhibit towards all children, sometime during the day.

**Indicator 7.2:**

To give credit for these indicators, several instances must be observed.

**19. Fine motor****Indicator 1.2:**

"Generally in poor repair or incomplete" means 80% of materials cannot be used properly because pieces are missing, parts are broken, or there are other problems.

**Indicator 3.1:**

There are several different types of fine motor materials, including small building toys such as interlocking blocks and Lincoln logs; art materials such as crayons and scissors; manipulatives such as beads of different sizes for stringing, pegs and pegboards, sewing cards; and puzzles. "Some" of each type means more than one example of each of the four types is accessible for 1 hour in an 8-hour program, prorated appropriately in shorter programs (see "Explanation of Terms Used Throughout the Scale" on p. 7 for

amount of time required). In order to be given credit for one example of a type, the material must be complete and in good enough condition to permit the activity for which it was designed. Therefore, crayons and paper to draw on is one example of an art material, a puzzle with all its pieces is one example of puzzles, a set of beads with strings is one example of manipulatives. (For further details about the four types of fine motor materials see All About the ECERS-R, pp. 189, 190.)

**Indicator 3.2:**

“Most” means 80% of fine motor materials.

**Indicator 5.1:**

“Many” requires at least three examples of each type to be accessible for a substantial portion of the day. Many items representing each type do not all have to be accessible at the same time, however a combination of these materials needs to be accessible for a substantial portion of the day to assure that children have a wide choice.

**Indicator 7.2:**

To give credit, almost all shelves and/or containers must have labels that are meaningful to the children.

## **20. Art**

**Item 20:**

Categories of art materials: drawing materials such as paper, crayons, nontoxic felt pens, thick pencils; paints; three-dimensional materials such as play dough, clay, wood gluing, or carpentry; collage materials; tools such as safe scissors, staplers, hole punches, tape dispensers.

Dot markers (also called Bingo markers, or dot paints) are counted in the “tools” category of art materials. They do not allow the control provided by the materials in the drawing category, nor do they fit the paint category, in terms of how they can be used.

**Montana Note**

Art materials that smell like food should not be used and toxic substances or materials labeled “Keep out of Reach of Children; such as shaving cream cannot be offered to the children for use in art activities.

**Indicator 1.1:**

“Rarely available” means activities with art materials are offered less than once a day, or if offered daily, all children do not have the opportunity to participate if they wish, or the time offered is too short to be satisfying to the children.

**Indicator 1.2:**

“Individual expression” means that each child may select the subject matter and/or art medium, and carry out the work in his or her own way. A number of paintings, each of which is different because the children have not been asked to imitate a model or assigned a subject to paint, is considered “individual expression.”

**Indicator 3.1:**

In groups with children under 3 years of age or with certain developmental delays, staff may bring out materials to make them accessible daily with close supervision for as long as there is interest.

Adaptations may be needed to make art materials accessible and usable for children with disabilities.

“Some” means at least one usable art material that will allow children to complete artwork (e.g., crayons with paper). To give credit, the materials must be accessible daily for at least 1 hour in an 8 hour program, prorated appropriately for shorter programs (see chart in “Explanation of Terms Used Throughout the Scale” on p. 7).

**Montana Note**

Crayons or other drawing materials (e.g., pencils, markers, chalk) are considered art materials in this item if used with plain paper or other plain surface, such as a chalkboard. They are not counted as art materials when used with coloring book pages or other pre-determined projects, except to meet the requirements for 1.1. When used with coloring books, etc, they are considered in item 19 Fine motor but not to meet the requirements for the art item.

**Indicator 3.2:**

“Individual expression” means that each child may select the subject matter and/or art medium, and carry out the work in his or her own way. A number of paintings, each of which is different because the children have not been asked to imitate a model or assigned a subject to paint, is considered “individual expression.”

**Montana Note**

“Some” means 50% of the time when art materials are used, children can do free art and are not required to follow an example.

**Indicator 5.1:**

“Many and varied” requires that 3-5 different art materials be accessible from at least four of the categories for a substantial portion of the day, and drawing materials is required as one of the four. All categories need not be accessible at the same time, as long as each is included for some time during the substantial portion of the day. (For more information about the categories, see All About the ECERS-R, p. 200.) Food cannot be counted as an art material.

**Montana Note**

Crayons or other drawing materials (e.g., pencils, markers, chalk) are considered art materials in this item if used with plain paper or other plain surface, such as a chalkboard. They are not counted as art materials when used with coloring book pages or other pre-determined projects, except to meet the requirements for 1.1. When used with coloring books, etc, they are considered in item 19 Fine motor but not to meet the requirements for the art item.

**Indicator 5.2:**

“Much individual expression” means that 85% of the time when art materials are used, children can do “free art” and are not required to follow an example. Observe to see whether children have access to the art materials and if they actually use them in their own creative way. You may also look at the artwork displayed in the room. If you see many teacher-directed projects displayed, and little individual work being done by the children during the observation, do not give credit for this indicator. If you are not sure, ask the teacher how often projects like those in the display are done. If projects that meet the requirements of 3.2 are used no more than once or twice a week, and you observe many instances of children using art materials in their own, creative way, you may give credit for 5.2, even if much of the work displayed is of the “project” variety. (For further discussion of individual expression requirements at the 3 and 5 levels, see All About the ECERS-R, pp. 201–204.)

**Indicator 7.2:****Montana Note**

Art activities related to other classroom experiences should allow children to do art in their own ways, while considering a topic being discussed and experienced in the class.

**21. Music/ movement****Indicator 1.1:****Montana Note**

Any music counted as a “type” for this indicator must be appropriate for use with children, in that the music contains no violent or sexually explicit material or language that is unacceptable according to typical societal standards.

Any musical experiences offered to the children in this indicator must be appropriate for use with children, in that the music contains no violent or sexually explicit material or language that is unacceptable according to typical societal standards. Some traditional children's songs such as Three Blind Mice contain frightening or offensive lyrics. If songs with such lyrics are used with the children, score this indicator "Yes." Music with religious content is considered appropriate as long as it does not contain frightening, violent, or negative content. Be sure to listen to the lyrics in order to judge the appropriateness. For assessment purposes, evaluate the severity of the lyrics and the impact on the children.

**Indicator 3.1:**

"Some" means more than one example of music materials are accessible for at least 1 hour per day in an 8-hour program, prorated appropriately for shorter programs (see "Explanation of Terms Used Throughout the Scale" on p. 7 for time required in shorter program). The materials need not be accessible at the same time.

**Indicator 3.2:**

**Montana Note**

Any musical experiences offered to the children in this indicator must be appropriate for use with children, in that the music contains no violent or sexually explicit material or language that is unacceptable according to typical societal standards. Some traditional children's songs such as Three Blind Mice contain frightening or offensive lyrics. If songs with such lyrics are used with the children, score this indicator "Yes." Music with religious content is considered appropriate as long as it does not contain frightening, violent, or negative content. Be sure to listen to the lyrics in order to judge the appropriateness. For assessment purposes, evaluate the severity of the lyrics and the impact on the children.

Songs initiated by the provider, such as a clean-up song, or a prayer sung at meals, count to meet the requirement of this indicator.

**Indicator 3.3:**

**Montana Note**

Children must have access to at least one movement activity at least once per week.

**Indicator 5.1:**

To give credit for "many," there must be enough musical instruments for at least half of the children to use at once plus some music to listen to, such as a tape player with tapes or a computer program that has extensive musical content (e.g., complete songs, and/or passages of music). Do not give credit for very short musical sound patterns on the computer, as found in many computer games. Dance props must be accompanied by something that makes music such as recorded music, child-created music, or adult created music. For a tape player to be considered accessible in a group of older children (majority of children are 4 years and older), children should be able to use the tapes independently, but in younger groups help may be needed from the teacher.

To give credit, the "many" music materials must be accessible for at least 1 hour daily in programs operating 8 hours or more a day. Less time is required for programs operating less than 8 hours a day, with the amount of time calculated proportionally, based on the ratio of 1 hour for programs of 8 hours or more (see "Explanation of Terms Used Throughout the Scale" on p. 7 for time required for shorter programs).

**Indicator 5.2:**

"Various types of music" means at least three different types. (See All About the ECERS-R, p. 216 for a list of types of music.)

**Montana Note**

Variety can be considered in songs sung in the classroom in addition to tapes, records, and/or CDs.

**Indicator 7.2:**

For this indicator, “occasionally” means at least 3–4 times per year.

**22. Blocks****Item 22:**

Blocks are materials suitable for building sizable structures. Types of blocks are unit blocks (wooden or plastic, including shapes such as rectangles, squares, triangles, and cylinders); large hollow blocks (wooden, plastic, or cardboard); homemade blocks (materials such as food boxes and plastic containers). Note that interlocking blocks (whether large or small, indoors or outdoors) are not considered blocks for this item, but are given credit under Item 19. Fine motor. Usually the block area will be found in the classroom being observed. However, in a center where there is a block area that is outside the observed classroom (such as in a multi-purpose room or outdoors), that is accessible to the children on a regular basis, this should be considered when scoring this item.

**Montana Note**

When determining if very small blocks should be considered under item 19 as fine motor materials or under item 22 as blocks, consider the size, intent, and placement.

There has been some inconsistency about the dimensions of blocks to be considered for this item, with some requiring that the blocks are “at least” 2 inches from the majority of sides, and others requiring “more than” 2 inches. To ensure reliability across assessors, blocks are now interpreted as having to be at least 2 inches for the majority of sides, rather than more than 2 inches.

Note: Interlocking blocks; such as Duplo’s are not considered here. They are considered under Fine Motor 19.

**Indicator 1.1:**

“Few blocks” means there are no blocks for children to use or fewer blocks than are needed for two children to each build a sizable structure.

**Indicator 3.1:**

“Enough blocks” means there are sufficient blocks of a specific type that can be used together to make a sizable structure. Random collections of blocks with fewer than 10-20 of each type cannot be given credit because they are difficult to build with. To give credit, block “accessories” need to be within or near the block area so that it is obvious to the children that those materials are to be used with the blocks. Accessories enrich block play. Examples are toy people, animals, vehicles, and road signs. If accessories are not stored near or with the blocks, it must be observed that children actually use the materials as block accessories. If not observed, then credit cannot be given.

**Indicator 3.1**

There are 3 types of accessories (transportation, people, animals) required for this item, although there can be other types made available to children as well. Within each type, there are subtypes. For example, animals may include subtypes of zoo and farm animals. For 3.1 and 3.3, only one type is required. For 5.1, two of the types are required. For 5.2, the two types must be stored separately, although subtypes can be stored together (ex., all animals in one container; all people in another). For 7.1, at a minimum, all three types must be represented.



**Indicator 3.2:****Montana Note**

Some means that the space, although not necessarily large, does allow the children to successfully balance, build and create structures in their block play. The space size would allow two children to build successfully without undue interference from one another or from others.

**Indicator 3.3:**

There are 3 types of accessories (transportation, people, animals) required for this item, although there can be other types made available to children as well. Within each type, there are subtypes. For example, animals may include subtypes of zoo and farm animals. For 3.1 and 3.3, only one type is required. For 5.1, two of the types are required. For 5.2, the two types must be stored separately, although subtypes can be stored together (ex., all animals in one container; all people in another). For 7.1, at a minimum, all three types must be represented.

To give credit, blocks and accessories must be accessible for one hour in programs of 8 hours or more, prorated for programs operating fewer hours (see "Explanation of Terms Used Throughout the Scale" p. 7).

**Indicator 5.1:**

There are 3 types of accessories (transportation, people, animals) required for this item, although there can be other types made available to children as well. Within each type, there are subtypes. For example, animals may include subtypes of zoo and farm animals. For 3.1 and 3.3, only one type is required. For 5.1, two of the types are required. For 5.2, the two types must be stored separately, although subtypes can be stored together (ex., all animals in one container; all people in another). For 7.1, at a minimum, all three types must be represented.

This indicator requires enough blocks for three children to build sizable structures independently. Observe how space for block play is used. No specific square footage is required. If you don't observe children using this area, then imagine how it would be used based on the size of the block area and type of blocks. Also consider age and ability of children.

**Montana Notes**

The requirement for enough space for three children to use the block area at one time will depend on their ages, and what you would expect them to be able to build. Obviously, preschoolers need enough space to build substantial independent structures. Watch to see if conflict arises due to space limitations.

**Indicator 5.2:****Montana Note**

There are 3 types of accessories (transportation, people, animals) required for this item, although there can be other types made available to children as well. Within each type, there are subtypes. For example, animals may include subtypes of zoo and farm animals. For 3.1 and 3.3, only one type is required. For 5.1, two of the types are required. For 5.2, the two types must be stored separately, although subtypes can be stored together (ex., all animals in one container; all people in another). For 7.1, at a minimum, all three types must be represented.

Centers should be organized to encourage independent use. Interest areas should be well defined and have accessories within the block area, so that the child doesn't have to go to other places in the room to find accessories.

**Indicator 5.3:**

The block area may include other types of small and interlocking blocks considered under Item 19. Fine motor, in addition to blocks, and still be given credit for being a special block area. Usually, credit cannot

be given if other materials, such as other fine motor toys, art, pretend play materials, or carpentry tools are included with the blocks and interfere with block play in any way. However, if there are a few hardhats or small toy houses/buildings in the block area that do not take up space, or interfere with block play, credit can be given.

**Indicator 5.4:**

All block areas considered in calculating accessibility for a substantial part of the day must meet requirements of 5.1–5.3. Additional block areas may be outdoors or in another indoor space.

**Montana Note**

If two or more block areas are present, all may be considered in calculating accessibility for substantial part of the day. However, only one must meet the criteria for a special block area. The other block area may be outdoors or in another indoor space.

**Indicator 7.1:**

There are 3 types of accessories (transportation, people, animals) required for this item, although there can be other types made available to children as well. Within each type, there are subtypes. For example, animals may include subtypes of zoo and farm animals. For 3.1 and 3.3, only one type is required. For 5.1, two of the types are required. For 5.2, the two types must be stored separately, although subtypes can be stored together (ex., all animals in one container; all people in another). For 7.1, at a minimum, all three types must be represented.

**Indicator 7.2:**

When labeling block shelves, use of printed words only without the graphic representation of blocks is not given credit.

**Indicator 7.3:**

**Montana Note**

Some block play, available outdoors means that the children have opportunities for more active block play without the space and noise restrictions associated with being indoors. A large number of blocks are not required but there should be enough blocks so children can explore, build and experiment without difficulty. The outdoor blocks do not need to be accessible daily, but should be available for the teacher to add to the other outdoor activities.

## **23. Sand/water**

**Item 23:**

Materials that can easily be poured, such as rice, lentils, birdseed, and cornmeal may be substituted for sand. Sand or sand substitute must be available in sufficient quantity so children can dig in it, fill containers, and pour. Woodchips can be considered a substitute for sand if the material can be used in the same way as sand—that is, easily poured or dug in—and if children would not get splinters when using the material. Health or safety issues related to use of sand, water, or sand substitutes should be considered in Items 13 and 14.

**Indicator 1.1:**

“Provision” for sand and water requires action on the part of staff to provide appropriate materials for such play. Allowing children to play in puddles or dig in the dirt on the playground does not meet the requirements of this item.

**Indicator 3.1:**

Each room does not have to have its own sand and water table, but must be able to use a sand and water table regularly if it is shared with another room. To give credit, access does not need to be provided on a daily basis, but should be a regular part of the program, for example, at least for ½ hour twice a week.

**Montana Note**

Provision means that staff have made accessible the equipment and materials needed for children to be able to play in sand and/or water (or an appropriate substitute) in a meaningful way.

**Indicator 3.1, 3.2****Montana Note**

If 3.1 is scored “No” because there are no provisions for sand/water, then 3.2 must also be scored “No.”

**Indicator 3.2:****Montana Note**

There must be at least two or more toys for children to use with sand or water (or an appropriate substitute) during the sensory activity.

**Indicator 5.2:**

For “variety,” consider the differences among the toys that children can use. Variety is represented in toy characteristics, such as use, size, transparency level, shape, color, and these types of properties should be considered, but use of the toys is of prime importance in making a scoring decision. If only duplicates of one toy are accessible (e.g., many spoons), then the requirements for variety are not met. Variety in toys does not have to be provided all at one time—variety can be provided through regular rotation of toys. If the teacher reports that toys are rotated, ask to see the other toys, and find out how often they are rotated. If both sand and water are accessible, variety in toys must be provided for both, but the same toys can be used to meet the requirement.

Number of toys accessible for play is also considered when determining “variety.” For example, when fewer children use the toys at one time, fewer toys are required for variety, as long as the toys can be used for different purposes. When more children must share, more toys of different types are needed.

**Montana Note**

For Montana, variety means 3-5 types, based on size of table, # of children using the table. Reference the intent of the requirement for variety in “All About” book.

**Indicator 5.3:**

For programs of 4 hours or less, the requirement of 1 hour is changed to ½ hour.

**Montana Note**

Change the word “available” to “accessible.” To give credit, the materials must be accessible daily for at least 1 hour in an 8 hour program, prorated appropriately for shorter programs (see chart in general notes).

**Indicator 7.1:**

Separate provisions for indoor use and outdoor use for sand and water play must be provided to give credit for this indicator. Giving credit cannot depend on a teacher’s moving one provision (e.g., a sand/water table) from indoors to outdoors every day. Because of the inconvenience for the teacher and the difficulty of changing the material in the one container to allow for the provision of both sand and water, dual use of one piece of equipment is unlikely to occur often.

**Montana Note**

For Montana, due to weather considerations, it may be appropriate to have to move the sand/water table in and out, as long as daily access is available.

## **24. Dramatic play**

### **Item 24:**

Dramatic play is pretending or making believe. This type of play occurs when children act out roles themselves and when they manipulate figures such as small toy people in a dollhouse. Thus, activities used to teach children to follow specific sequences to properly complete household chores, such as table washing or silver polishing activities, are not counted to meet the requirements of this item. Children must be free to use the materials in their own way, as part of their own make-believe play, to get credit for this item.

Dramatic play is enhanced by props that encourage a variety of themes including housekeeping (e.g., dolls, child-sized furniture, dress-up, kitchen utensils); different kinds of work (e.g., office, construction, farm, store, fire-fighting, transportation); fantasy (e.g., animals, dinosaurs, storybook characters); and leisure (e.g., camping, sports).

### **Indicator 3.1:**

#### **Montana Note**

There should be enough dramatic play materials for children to be able to carry out meaningful pretend play. Some requires enough materials for several children to use at one time. This may vary with the age and ability of the children in the group, with more required for older children. Classrooms with more children will require more materials than classroom with fewer children.

### **Indicator 3.2:**

To give credit, the materials must be accessible for at least 1 hour daily in programs operating 8 hours or more. Less time is required for programs operating less than 8 hours a day, with the amount of time calculated proportionally (see "Explanation of Terms Used Throughout the Scale" on p. 7 for time required for shorter programs).

### **Indicator 5.1:**

"Many" dramatic play materials means that three or more children can use the materials at one time, without undue competition, and the materials are plentiful enough to encourage more complex play. Dress-up clothes are required as part of the "many" materials, but many examples of dress-up clothes are not required. Hats, purses, and shoes count as dress-up clothes. However, since children are developing gender-role identity during the preschool years, they require concrete examples of dress-ups that are associated with being men or women. Thus, two or three gender-specific examples of dress-up items are required (such as ties, hard hats, or shoes to represent men's clothes; purses or flowery hats for women's). More generic clothing, such as sweatshirts or running shoes, can also be provided, but these do not count as gender-specific dress-ups.

### **Indicator 5.2:**

Consider materials both indoors and outdoors when calculating accessibility for a substantial portion of the day. Dress-up clothes, required in 5.1, are not required for outdoor dramatic play because they might be dangerous. However, props outside must be complete enough to permit meaningful pretend play. For example, an outdoor house must have furniture and other props, doll strollers must have dolls, kitchen furniture must have things to use in a kitchen, child-sized riding cars should have a gas pump or things to transport, cars in the sandbox should have a toy garage or people.

To score this indicator Yes, indicator 5.1 must have been scored Yes.

### **Indicator 5.3:**

Consider small toys that children can pretend with, both indoors and outdoors, when scoring this indicator (e.g., small dolls, trucks, animals). (For further discussion about dramatic play themes see All About the ECERS-R, pp. 239–241.)

**Indicator 5.4:**

Organized storage means that materials of the same type (e.g., dolls, dress-ups, cooking props, food props) are generally stored together (e.g., in containers or in furniture). Storage does not have to be perfectly neat.

**Indicator 7.2:**

Consider dolls of different races, cultures, ages, and abilities as props for this indicator, as well as dress-up clothes, play foods, and cooking utensils representing different cultures.

**Indicator 7.3:**

The intent of this indicator is that children are provided a large enough space so that their dramatic play can be very active and noisy without disrupting other activities. A large indoor space such as a gymnasium or multi-purpose room may be substituted for the outdoor space. Structures (such as small houses, cars, or boats) and props for camping, cooking, work, transportation, or dress-up clothes may be available to the children.

**25. Nature/science****Item 25:**

Nature/science materials include the following categories: collections of natural objects (e.g., rocks, insects, seed pods), living things to care for and observe (e.g., house plants, gardens, pets), nature/science books, games, or toys (e.g., nature matching cards, nature sequence cards), and nature/science activities such as cooking and simple experiments (e.g., with magnets, magnifying glasses, sink-and-float). The term collections of natural objects requires that there are groups of similar objects that can be classified together. For example, look for a collection of seashells, fall seeds, leaves, pinecones. Sufficient numbers of the objects in each collection must be present to allow children to explore similarities and/or differences. The collections must be of natural things; plastic collections (e.g., insects, zoo animals) are counted as science/nature toys. Collections must be accessible to the children if they are to count towards meeting indicator 5.2, requiring a substantial portion of the day.

**Montana Note**

In Montana, for all pertinent indicators, natural live elements are okay; such as farm and ranch animals etc.

**Indicator 3.1:**

Open-ended nature/science materials that children can explore in their own way are usually developmentally appropriate for a wide range of ages and abilities. Materials that require skills beyond the ability of individual children or that do not challenge children sufficiently are not developmentally appropriate. For example, having children fill in the height of the red line on a thermometer to tell hot from cold may be appropriate for kindergartners but not for 2-year-olds.

**Montana Note**

There should be more than one developmentally appropriate (useable for play or exploration games/materials/activities accessible to children from two of the nature/science categories.

**Indicator 3.2:**

Materials must be accessible for at least 1 hour in a program of 8 hours or longer, prorated for shorter programs (see "Explanation of Terms Used Throughout the Scale" on p. 7).

**Montana Note**

If credit cannot be given for 3.1, then credit cannot be given for 3.2.

**Indicator 5.1:**

"Many" means approximately 3–5 examples of three categories of nature/science materials. However, this can vary as long as three of the four categories are represented. In some cases you might give credit for

more than 3–5 of one type and less than 3–5 of another. This will also depend on the ages and number of children in the group. (For a description of each of the four categories of nature/science materials, see All About the ECERS-R, pp. 253–256.)

**Indicator 5.2:**

Consider materials both indoors and outdoors when calculating accessibility for a substantial portion of the day. Requirements for 5.1 must be met in order to give credit for 5.2. If outdoor time is included in calculating substantial portion of the day, materials from at least two categories must be accessible during outdoor time.

**Indicator 5.3:**

**Montana Note**

“Event” means that children have daily experience with either living plants or animals. The experiences can take place indoors or outdoors. In order to receive credit, living things (plants, animals, etc.) must be easily seen by the children. If these items are stored out of the view of children (on top of a shelf, behind a cabinet, etc.) the teacher must make these accessible by bringing them down to the children’s eye level. There must be clear evidence that this occurs on a daily basis and that the intent is for children to have meaningful experiences with living things.

**Indicator 5.4:**

Must observe one example or see clear evidence (e.g., photos, drawings). (For examples of everyday events see All About the ECERS-R, pp. 259–260.)

**26. Math/ numbers**

**Item 26:**

Different types of materials for math/number help children to experience counting, measuring, comparing quantities, recognizing shapes, and to become familiar with written numbers. Examples of math/number materials are: small objects to count, balance scales, rulers, number puzzles, magnetic numbers, number games such as dominoes or number lotto, and geometric shapes such as parquet blocks.

**Indicator 1.2:**

“Taught primarily through rote counting or worksheets” means that such experiences make up the vast majority of children’s math/number learning opportunities.

**Indicator 3.1:**

Developmentally appropriate math/number materials allow children to use concrete objects to experiment with quantity, size, and shape as they develop the concepts they need for the more abstract tasks required later in school, such as adding, subtracting, and completing paper and pencil math problems. Whether a material or activity is appropriate is based on the abilities and interests of the children. An occasional math worksheet offered to kindergartners who have many other concrete materials to manipulate may be developmentally appropriate for them, but not for 2- and 3-year-olds. Look around the room carefully to find math materials because they might not be organized into a center. “Some” means at least two different materials from at least three of the five types listed. (For a list of examples of the categories of math materials see All About the ECERS-R, pp. 267–269.)

**Indicator 3.2:**

To give credit, materials must be accessible for 1 hour in programs of 8 hours or more, prorated for programs operating fewer hours (see “Explanation of Terms Used Throughout the Scale,” p. 7).

**Indicator 5.1:**

“Many” means approximately 3–5 of each type. However, this can vary, as long as all five types are represented. In some cases you might give credit for more than 3–5 of one type and less than 3–5 of another. This will also depend on the ages and number of children in the group. Credit should be given for materials obviously designed for math learning (e.g., puzzle with graduated sizes or different shapes,

pegboard with number printed and holes to match, balance scale with things to weigh, nested cups that require size recognition). To give credit for more generic materials (blocks, beads for stringing, sets of bears with many pieces), it must be observed that the materials are used for math learning.

**Indicator 5.2:**

**Montana Note**

Requirements for 5.1 must be met in order to give credit for 5.2.

**Indicator 5.3:**

In order to give credit for “well organized and in good condition,” about 75% of the materials that are accessible should meet this standard.

**Indicator 5.4:**

The intent of this indicator is for adults to link math and numbers to practical life events in the children's daily schedule. Therefore, look for use of numbers during meals or getting ready for meals (such as setting the table), transition times, using a timer to take turns, counting who is absent, etc. Do not give credit for play activities such as number games or computer games in determining the score for this indicator. “Number talk” or number experiences as part of practical life events should be observed more than once during the observation to give credit for this indicator. (For examples of number talk see All About the ECERS-R, pp. 272, 273.)

**Indicator 7.1:**

For a list of activities see All About the ECERS-R, pp. 273, 274.

## **27. Use of TV, video and or computers**

**Item 27:**

If neither TV, video, nor computer is used, score the item NA (Not Applicable). You must always ask about the use of TV and computers as they are often shared by several classrooms and may not be evident on the day of your visit. If TV/video are used very infrequently, less than once a month, and only for relatively short periods during which all children are interested, mark this item NA. However, even if TV is used infrequently, but for longer periods at a time, causing problems for the children, score the item as written.

**Montana Note**

If the assessor observes movies/videos being used that have violent or otherwise inappropriate material, discount the appropriate indicator. Otherwise, ask about the program's/provider's policy concerning use of TV and videos. No longer base your determination on what you see stored in the room. Do not reference movie/program names or ratings on summary reports. If audio/visual materials are used less than once a month while children are interested, mark this item NA.

**Indicator 1.1:**

To judge whether materials are non-violent and culturally sensitive, consider the content of the materials. Unfortunately, many children's videos or TV programs contain violence and are therefore inappropriate even though they have been created for the children's market. This may include some natural wildlife productions and cartoons. The appropriateness of videos or games brought from children's homes also must be judged, if these materials are used with the group of children.

**Indicator 3.1:**

To judge whether materials are non-violent and culturally sensitive, consider the content of the materials. Unfortunately, many children's videos or TV programs contain violence and are therefore inappropriate even though they have been created for the children's market. This may include some natural wildlife productions and cartoons. The appropriateness of videos or games brought from children's homes also must be judged, if these materials are used with the group of children.

**Indicator 3.3:**

The intent of this indicator is to ensure that children participate in play in which they can actively be creative, imaginative, and have hands-on experiences with real materials rather than spending inordinate amounts of time watching TV or playing computer games. The amount of time given in the example is a general indication of a required time limitation and can vary. When deciding whether adequate limits are set on amount of time children can use the computer, consider not just how long each child's turn is, but also the number of turns each child is allowed to have, and if children spend time watching others at the computer. Computer time should be relatively short, compared to other activities.

Due to recommendations in the 2011 version of *Caring for Our Children*, pages 66-67, time allowed for children to view television, video, DVD and use the computer ("media screen time") has been changed. Time is limited for children in ECERS groups to not more than 30 minutes total, once a week. Computer use time should be limited to no more than 15 minutes per day for children in a program of any length with the exception of children with disabilities who require assistive computer technology. No media screen time should be allowed during meals/snacks.

**Montana Note**

The time children "use" the computer includes the time that the children watch other children use the computer.

**Indicator 5.1:**

Materials that are developed specifically to enhance children's learning and understanding are considered to be more educational and "good for children." (For examples see *All About the ECERS-R*, p. 282.)

**Montana Note**

To be considered "good for children," materials for computer and TV viewing must be appropriate and educational.

**Indicator 7.1:****Montana Note**

Software encouraging creativity must be an option that is used regularly, at least, once a week or more frequently if computers are used. For computer software to encourage creativity in children, it must do more than simply have children "point and click" to get a response, and it must encourage thinking, rather than rote responses.

**28. Promoting acceptance of Diversity****Item 28:**

When assessing diversity in materials, consider all areas and materials used by children, including pictures and photos displayed, books, puzzles, games, dolls, play people in the block area, puppets, music tapes, videos, and computer software.

**Indicator 1.3:**

Score "Yes" only if there is obvious, deliberate, and repeated prejudice shown. Do not score "Yes" if one isolated example of "politically incorrect" or "culturally insensitive behavior" is observed (e.g., teacher asks children to "sit Indian style"). However, in order to sensitize the staff, any such instance should be mentioned, for example in technical assistance associated with the scales.

**Indicator 3.1:**

"Some" means at least one example of racial diversity and at least one example of cultural diversity are present and easily seen by the children in the classroom used by the group most of the day.



**Indicator 3.2:**

If stereotyping or violence is shown with regard to any group, such as some “Cowboy and Indian” toys, then this indicator should be scored No. Gender equity should also be considered here. Portrayals of men/boys doing traditionally male activities and women/girls doing traditionally female activities are acceptable. However, do not give credit if gender stereotyping is portrayed negatively in any way. Look for problems that would be easily obvious to the children. It is not necessary to search avidly for negative examples. When historic cultural traditions are represented, the images must be balanced with non-traditional modern representations. For example, if traditional African tribal cultures are represented in materials, then current representations must also be included.

**Indicator 3.3:****Montana Note**

If no prejudice is observed, and the observer sees plenty of evidence that such behavior would be very unlikely, give credit.

**Indicator 5.1:**

For this indicator, many books, many pictures, and many materials are required, and all categories of diversity listed need to be included to some degree. However, many examples of each category are not required. Materials must be located in spaces children use for a substantial portion of the day. Materials located in spaces used only for relatively short periods (e.g., hallways, entry way, lunch room, early AM or late PM classroom) are not counted to meet the requirements of this indicator.

Photographs of the children in the group and their families are given credit in Item 6. Child related display, indicator 5.1 and not as “pictures showing diversity” in this item, even if the children and their families in the class photos show diversity of race, culture, abilities or gender roles. In order to be given credit for this indicator, many (at least 3-5) pictures that have been selected intentionally by staff to clearly show diversity, are displayed so they are easy for children to see in the space used by the children most of the time.

**Montana Note**

For Montana we will accept family and classroom pictures for diversity. Required materials should be accessible for a substantial portion of the day.

All of the materials, including books, pictures and other materials, must be located in the major spaces used by the children for much of the day. Some may be in one place, while others are in another space. Flannel board pieces, showing diversity, are given credit as materials if children can reach and use them. Flannel board pieces that children can only look at, as part of the display, are given credit as pictures. (NC Note)

No credit can be given twice for any materials considered in 5.1 and 5.2.

**Indicator 5.2:**

To give credit, more than two examples must be observed to be accessible either indoors or outdoors, and obvious to the children. Examples include different kinds of dolls, puppets, and block/dramatic play people; dress-up clothes, foods, eating and cooking utensils from different cultures.

**Montana Note**

For Montana we will accept family and classroom pictures for diversity. Required materials should be accessible for a substantial portion of the day.

No credit can be given twice for any materials considered in 5.1 and 5.2.

Note to Assessors: Delete the current note for clarification. Replace with “To give credit, three examples representing different elements of diversity (examples: clothing, skin tone, food, abilities, eating utensils and dishes, etc.) found in more than one type of prop must be accessible for use in dramatic play indoors or outdoors.”

An example of diversity requires that there is a contrast between two props. For example, one white doll, contrasted with one African American doll represents one example, as does one play food item of a taco contrasted with a play food item of beans with rice. Four examples must be observed (each consisting of two props). Once an item is counted in one example, it cannot be counted in contrast with another prop to form a second example. Dolls are required as at least one of the examples. Small toy people used with doll house or blocks can be used to meet the doll requirement.

**Indicator 7.1:**

**Montana Note**

We will accept family and classroom pictures but we want to see that whatever is being displayed is meaningful to Montana children and that the display is well thought out and intentional.

**Indicator 7.2:**

**Montana Note**

Activities should be provided at least 4 times a year.

## **29. Supervision of gross motor activities**

**Item 29:**

To score this item, consider all teachers supervising gross motor activities and all children of similar age/abilities as those in the group you are observing. Notice whether adults are supervising the most hazardous areas/activities adequately.

**Indicator 1.1:**

The example in this indicator, of children being left unattended even for a short period of the time, means that no adult is present to supervise children.

**Indicator 1.2:**

“Most” means over 50% of all interactions during gross motor times, including both verbal and non-verbal.

**Indicator 3.2:**

“Some positive staff-child interaction” means that most exchanges are either neutral or positive, and at least two positive instances must be observed. To give credit, most interactions cannot be negative.

**Indicator 5.2:**

“Most staff-child interactions” means that the vast majority of verbal and nonverbal interactions are positive. Neutral interactions must be outweighed by positive and helpful interactions. There may be one or two slightly negative interactions but no extremely negative ones observed.

**Indicator 5.3:**

**Montana Note**

To give credit, these must be observed at least once.

**Indicator 7.1:****Montana Note**

To give credit, these must be observed at least once.

**Indicator 7.3:****Montana Note**

To give credit, these must be observed at least once.

**30. General supervision****Item 30:**

The score for this item must be based on what is seen throughout the observation, during routines and play activities. Do not score until supervision has been observed under a wide range of circumstances, including more relaxed and more stressful times.

**Indicator 1.2:**

"Most supervision" means the majority (over 50%) of supervision that has been observed.

**Indicator 3.1:****Montana Note**

Discount if children are not adequately supervised while eating.

**Indicator 3.3:**

"Most supervision" means the majority (over 50%) of supervision that has been observed.

**31. Discipline****Indicator 3.1:****Montana Note**

Discount if teacher/caregiver uses harsh punishment, threatens, or physically disciplines any child.

**Indicator 3.3:****Montana Note**

If the basic play needs of children in the group are rarely met, resulting in children spending long periods with nothing interesting to do or to learn, score 3.3 "no." If 20 minutes or more of wait time, score 3.3 "no." A wait of less than 3 minutes is acceptable. If the time with no access lasts for 3 or more minutes, use the whole time in calculating the 20 minutes time limit. Do not omit the first three minutes of the time without access.

**Indicator 5.3:**

There needs to be general consistency among staff members in the way they handle different situations and children. This does not mean that there can be no flexibility. Basic rules for positive social interaction in a group, such as no hitting or hurting, respect for others and for materials, should always be followed. A specialized program may be needed to help a child with a disability follow basic classroom rules.

**Indicator 7.2:**

To give credit the activities must be done regularly enough to have an impact on the children's understanding—at least once a week.

**Montana Note**

If not observed, credit can be given if staff provide examples. These opportunities should occur at least once a week

**Indicator 7.3:**

In most cases “other professionals” means someone from outside the program that specializes in the area of concern. The early childhood professionals (teachers, director, etc.) who work in the classrooms and center can benefit from an outsider’s perspective of a child who is experiencing difficulties. In a few cases, however, a program staff member can count as the “other professional” if the person has a specialization in the area of concern and can give an unbiased perspective.

**32. Staff-child interaction****Item 32:**

While the indicators for quality in this item generally hold true across a diversity of cultures and individuals, the ways in which they are expressed may differ. For example, direct eye contact in some cultures is a sign of respect; in others, a sign of disrespect. Similarly, some individuals are more likely to smile and be demonstrative than others. However, the requirements of the indicators must be met, although there can be some variation in the way this is done.

**Indicator 1.2:**

Score this indicator “Yes” only if many unpleasant interactions are observed throughout the observation or during one part of the observation. If only one or two brief instances are observed, and most interactions are neutral or positive, score “No”.

**Indicator 5.3:**

Sympathetic response means that staff notice and validate a child’s feelings, even if the child is showing emotions that are often considered unacceptable, such as anger or impatience. The feelings should be accepted although inappropriate behaviors, such as hitting or throwing things, should not be allowed.

A sympathetic response should be provided in most, but not necessarily all, cases. If children are able to solve minor problems themselves, then a teacher response is not needed. The observer needs to get an overall impression of the response of the staff. If minor problems persist and are ignored or if staff respond in an unsympathetic manner, give no credit for this indicator.

**33. Interaction among children****Indicator 3.1:****Montana Note**

No specific amount of time is required for the interactions to be encouraged. Observe to see whether encouragement is a regular practice, depending on the ages of the children, their moods, etc. Some encouragement should be seen for at least part of the observation, with more time required for children who are older.

**Indicator 3.3:****Montana Note**

Positive peer interaction must be observed occasionally during the observation. The rest of the interactions tend to be more neutral than negative.

**Indicator 7.2:****Montana Note**

If not observed, credit can be given if staff.

**34. Schedule****Indicator 1.1:**

“Daily events” refers to time for indoor and outdoor play activities as well as routines such as meals/snacks, nap/rest, and greeting/departing.

**Indicator 3.2:**

The “written schedule” need not be followed to the minute. The intent of this indicator is that the general sequence of events is being followed. The written schedule must be posted in the room to get credit; outside the door is not acceptable.

**Indicator 3.3:**

Both the indoor and outdoor play periods must each equal at least 1 hour in length for programs operating 8 hours or more (see “Explanation of Terms Used Throughout the Scale” on p. 7 for requirements for programs operating less than 8 hours a day).

**Indicator 5.4:**

“Long period of waiting” means waiting without any activity for three minutes or more between daily events, (e.g., running around aimlessly, whole group sitting at tables waiting for lunch, waiting in line to go out or to use the bathroom). Note that this indicator refers to waiting between transitions from one activity to another, rather than waiting within any activity.

**Indicator 7.1:****Montana Note**

Transitions should never require harsh treatment of children to avoid trouble and force compliance.

**35. Free play****Item 35:**

Child is permitted to select materials and companions, and as far as possible manage play independently. Adult interaction is in response to child’s needs. Situations in which children are assigned to centers by staff or staff select the materials that individual children may use do not count as free play.

**Indicator 3.1:**

“Free play” or free choice does not require that all areas are open for children’s choice. The number of centers may be limited as long as the children may choose where, with what, and with whom they play. To give credit, children must be able to participate in free play for at least 1 hour daily in full-day programs of 8 hours or more. The 1 hour may take place at one time, or be a combination of times throughout the day (see “Explanation of Terms Used Throughout the Scale” on p. 7 for time required for programs operating less than 8 hours a day).

**Indicator 3.1:**

“Except in very bad weather”: Health experts are unanimous on the importance of fresh air and the negative health consequences of children spending too much time in closed, indoor settings. If a child is well enough to be at the center, the child is generally assumed to be well enough to go outside. Except in extreme weather, children are expected to go outside every day.

Classes of older children will go outdoors to play every day the temperature plus wind-chill factor is 15 degrees or above as long as conditions are safe, e.g. if ice is not a danger. When it is very cold outdoor play times can be shortened. The basic rule of thumb is one minute for each degree. If the temperature permits, the children can go outside in snow but not in freezing rain or sleet. The importance of appropriate clothing and outerwear should be considered rather than restricting outdoor play.

“Weather-permitting” or “Inclement weather” policy taken from Caring for our Children national health and safety performance standards.

Children shall play outdoors daily when weather and air quality conditions do not pose a significant health risk.

Weather that poses a significant health risk shall include wind chill at or below 15 degrees F and heat index at or above 90 degrees F, as identified by the National Weather Service.

Air quality conditions that pose a significant health risk shall be identified by announcements from local health authorities or through ozone alerts. Such air quality conditions shall require that children remain indoors where air conditioners ventilate indoor air to the outdoors. Children with respiratory health problems such as asthma shall not play outdoors when local health authorities announce that the air quality is approaching unhealthy levels.

**Indicator 3.2:**

This indicator assesses whether children are supervised to minimize major hazards to their health and safety during free play, indoors and out, but does not apply to routines or other supervision (e.g., children are supervised so that they do not play with matches or swallow poisons, etc.). Do not score “No” unless supervision during free play is extremely lax.

**Montana Note**

Consider relative dangers, developmental level of the child, and ease of quick access to the child when deciding whether supervision is extremely lax. For example, allowing children to play outdoors, unsupervised would be considered extremely lax supervision of free play, even if other parts of free play were supervised well.

**Indicator 3.3:**

**Montana Note**

Some toys, games and equipment means enough for children to use in free play without undue competition. There must also be enough materials accessible so children can make choices about what to play with.

**Indicator 5.1:**

“Except in very bad weather”: Health experts are unanimous on the importance of fresh air and the negative health consequences of children spending too much time in closed, indoor settings. If a child is well enough to be at the center, the child is generally assumed to be well enough to go outside. Except in extreme weather, children are expected to go outside every day.

Classes of older children will go outdoors to play every day the temperature plus wind-chill factor is 15 degrees or above as long as conditions are safe, e.g. if ice is not a danger. When it is very cold outdoor play times can be shortened. The basic rule of thumb is one minute for each degree. If the temperature permits, the children can go outside in snow but not in freezing rain or sleet. The importance of appropriate clothing and outerwear should be considered rather than restricting outdoor play.

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problems such as asthma shall not play outdoors when local health authorities announce that the air quality is approaching unhealthy levels.

### **36. Group time**

#### **Indicator 1.1:**

“Whole group” generally means all the children in the class. However, if a very large group is broken into two large groups, and the children in each group must participate in the same activity, consider this a whole-group time. “Kept together as whole group most of the day” means 75% of the time the children are in the program.

#### **Montana Note**

“Whole group” refers to all the children who are required to do the same activity. The term “whole group” applies even when some children, are exempt from participating in the required activity.

#### **Indicator 1.2:**

The definition of small groups may change with the age and individual needs of the children. For typically developing 2- and 3-year-olds, a suitable small group might be three-to-five children, whereas for 4- and 5-year-olds, five-to-eight children might be manageable.

#### **Indicator 3.1:**

The definition of small groups may change with the age and individual needs of the children. For typically developing 2- and 3-year-olds, a suitable small group might be three-to-five children, whereas for 4- and 5-year-olds, five-to-eight children might be manageable.

#### **Montana Note**

Some play activities requires that children are not kept together as a whole group most of the day.

#### **Indicator 3.2:**

The definition of small groups may change with the age and individual needs of the children. For typically developing 2- and 3-year-olds, a suitable small group might be three-to-five children, whereas for 4- and 5-year-olds, five-to-eight children might be manageable.

#### **Montana Note**

Opportunities require that children have the chance to participate in one or more self-selected groups at least one time during the day. Credit cannot be given if the staff determines the makeup of the small groups.

#### **Indicator 5.1:**

“Whole-group gatherings” may not be suitable for children under 3½ years of age or some children with special needs. If this is the case, no group gatherings are required for a 5, and credit should be given for this indicator. One way to determine whether the whole-group gathering is suitable is whether the children remain interested and involved.

#### **Montana Note**

“Whole group” refers to all the children who are required to do the same activity. The term “whole group” applies even when some children, are exempt from participating in the required activity.

#### **Indicator 5.2:**

The definition of small groups may change with the age and individual needs of the children. For typically developing 2- and 3-year-olds, a suitable small group might be three-to-five children, whereas for 4- and 5-year-olds, five-to-eight children might be manageable.

To give credit for “many,” at least half of the play activities observed should be completed in small groups or individually.

**Indicator 5.3:**

**Montana Note**

Delete the word “some.” It should read “routines done in small groups or individually.” There should be clear indication that as part of the general practice, routines are done individually or in small groups.

**Indicator 7.2:**

To give credit for this indicator, the assessor must observe to get a general impression of what the children experience. One staff member might be stronger in educational interaction than another, and if the stronger teacher is strong enough, credit can be given.

**37. Provisions for children with disabilities**

**Item 37:**

Note that this item is scored only if there is a child in the group with an identified and diagnosed disability, with a completed assessment. If the diagnosis and assessment have not been completed on the child, (or if there is no child with a disability included in the classroom), score this item NA. If the child is receiving services, this can be accepted as evidence that a diagnosis and assessment exist. Existence of an IEP/IFSP is not required to score this item. To ensure privacy for families, the teacher need not point out the child or tell the observer about the particulars of the disability. As you question the teacher about how the identified child’s special needs are handled, you do not need to know which child is being discussed.

**Montana Note**

ECERS 37, ITTERS-R 32, FDCRS 35 and 40, and SACERS 44 should be scored NA unless a child with a disability that has been diagnosed through a formal assessment procedure and receives (or is eligible for) early intervention services is enrolled. Across all four scales, the following aspects should be considered when scoring: modifications, parent involvement, inclusion, and use of assessment information. Look for the extent of modifications needed to the schedule or classroom to include the child in daily activities, parent and staff communication regarding the child’s assessment information and ongoing therapy, and the use of assessment information into planning throughout the day. Some parents may not share all information with staff for various reasons. Consider the levels of quality when determining if staff and parents have shared enough information to meet the child’s needs. Even if staff put significant effort into asking about a child’s needs, if parents share no information, the child’s development is compromised.

**Indicator 3.2:**

“Minor modifications” may include limited changes in the environment (such as a ramp) to allow the children to attend, or a therapist who visits the program to work with the children periodically.

**Indicator 3.3:**

**Montana Note**

Involvement can take place through formal meetings, informal conversations or phone or written communications.

**Indicator 3.4:**

**Montana Note**

Involvement means a child with a disability/special need sometimes participates with others in the class, and at other times may not. The child should sometimes (but not necessarily always) participate in play as well as routine care activities.

**Indicator 5.1:**



**Montana Note**

At the “good” level of quality, include any changes needed to allow the child with a disability to participate in many of the classroom activities with others.